JANUARY 1967

Commentary

VOLUME FORTY-THREE, NUMBER ONE

THE AMERICAN CRISIS

Vietnam, Cuba & the Dominican Republic

THEODORE DRAPER

THE ENIGMA OF CIRCUMCISION: Erich Isaac

DEATH OF A SLOGAN—THE GREAT SOCIETY 1967: Robert Lekachman

RACE WARS IN THE MAKING: George Lichtheim

EXHIBITING THE LOWER EAST SIDE: Robert Alter

LESLIE FIEDLER'S FICTIONS: Robert Gorham Davis

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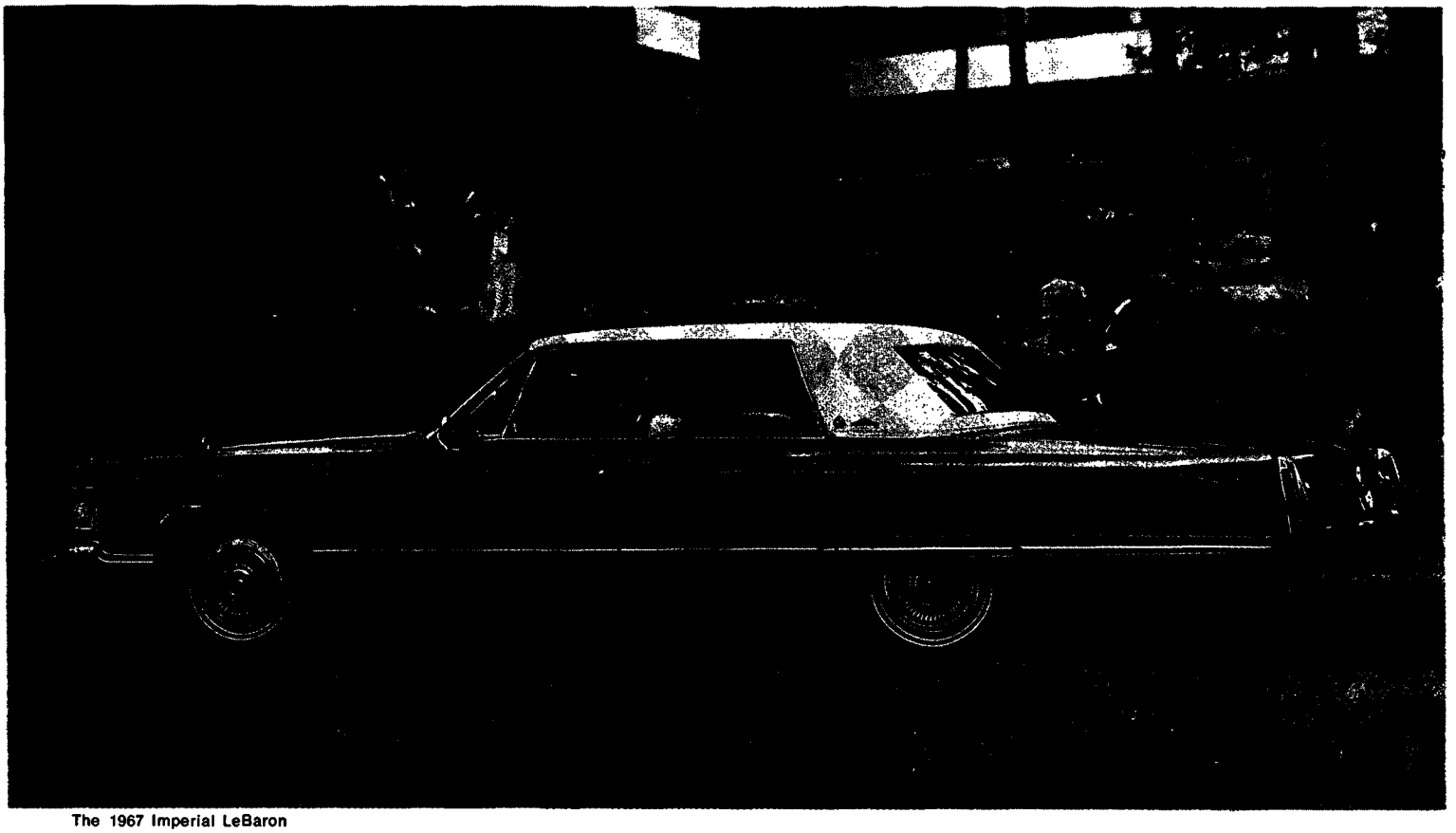

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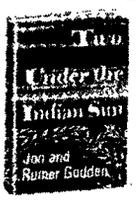

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Commentary

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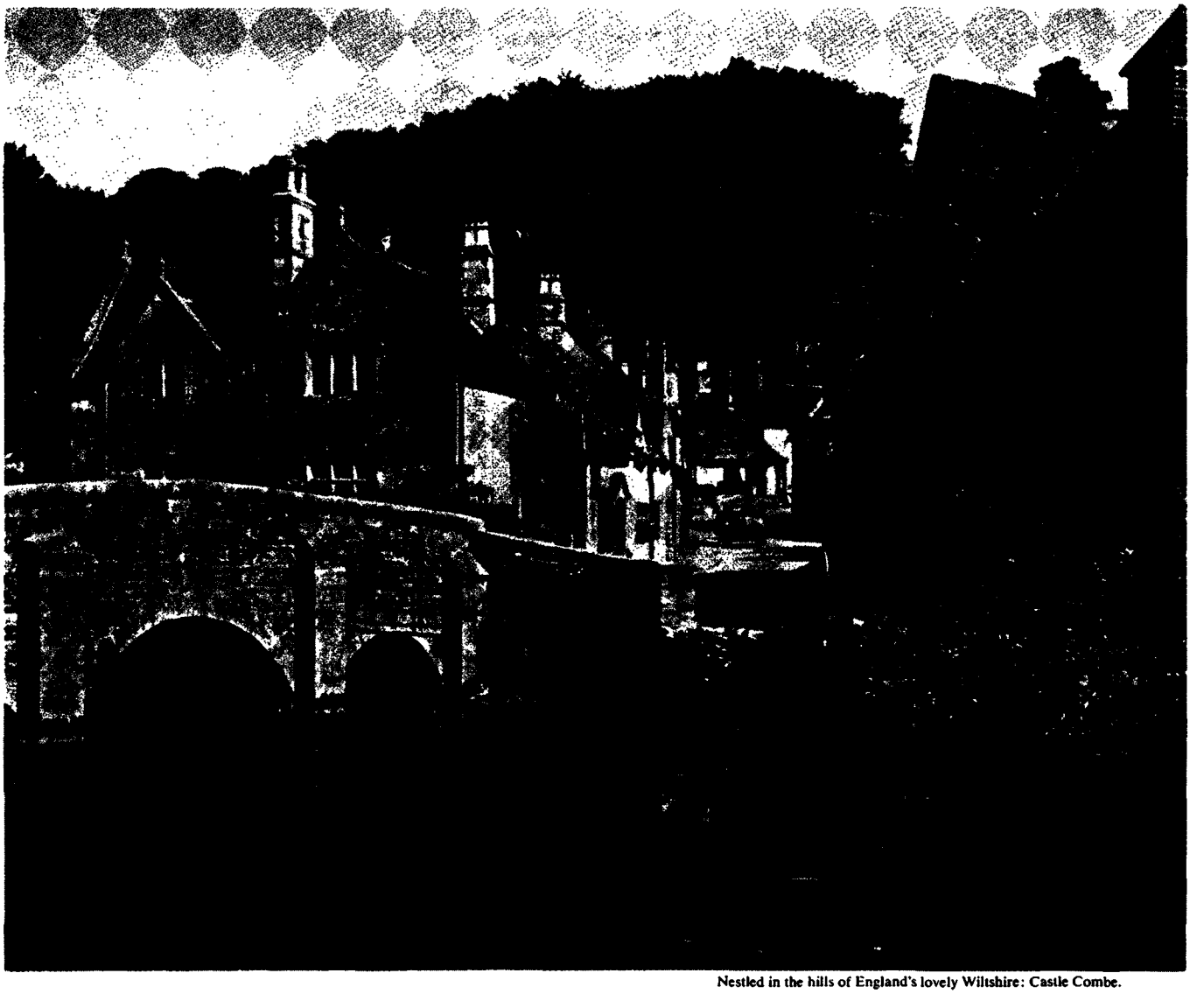

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LETTERS FROM READERS

"Black Power"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . In David Danzig's understandable zeal to adduce all possible evidence in support of the assertion that almost all Negro organizations endorse group solidarity, he has helped perpetuate a totally false account of an incident in connection with our 1966 convention ["In Defense of 'Black Power,'" September 1966]. He states, "Jack Greenberg, the white head of the NAACP conference Defense Fund, was asked not to attend the very NAACP conference at which Roy Wilkins denounced 'black power': a less obvious and more typical concession to the rising feeling among Negroes that important posts in the civil-rights field should be filled by their own people."

Since, in one of the versions of this egregious error the "barring" of Jack Greenberg was attributed to his being a Jew, Mr. Danzig could just as well have claimed that the action reflected a concession by the NAACP to rising anti-Semitism among Negroes.

In fact, it is totally untrue that Jack Greenberg was asked "not to attend" the convention. He would have been perfectly welcome at the convention as would any of his staff. What did occur was that I wrote Mr. Greenberg in response to his inquiry to advise him that, in our judgment, the holding by the Legal Defense Fund of a pre-convention series of lawyers' meetings would be inadvisable. In past years, these pre-convention sessions featuring prominent personalities have attracted wide media attention and have inevitably resulted in the statement of positions and policies and the announcement of programs which, as presented to the public, appear to be those of the NAACP. They have, consequently, tended frequently to blanket the opening of the NAACP convention, at which we want maximum attention focused on the executive director's keynote address.

The matter has been discussed back and forth in this perspective for several years. This year, we concluded that the public-relations problems dictated the request that the Legal Defense Fund not hold its meetings in our convention city and in inescapable conjunction with our meetings.

I am more sorry than I can say that Mr. Danzig did not see fit to seek the facts out before he gave them the kind of currency which they will inevitably have in COMMENTARY.

JOHN A. MORSELL
Assistant Executive Director
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Bayard Rustin is correct in his appraisal of "black power" as suicidal in the face of the fact that there are only 20 million Negroes in the United States—a fact that makes coalition politics an obvious necessity [" 'Black Power' and Coalition Politics," September 1966].

Both Mr. Rustin and Mr. Danzig, however, failed to stress the fact that the cry of "black power" as voiced by Carmichael, McKissick, *et al.*, does not merely imply the abandonment of non-violence as a tactic—it tells the ghetto dweller to get out on the streets and "burn baby, burn!" It's time to stop kidding ourselves and start listening carefully to the harangues of the leaders of SNCC and CORE—the need for Negro leadership must be obvious at this stage. Yes, we do need "black power" to challenge the position of black nationalists who are intent on raising the banner of segregation and racism among the embittered and frustrated.

. . . Almost every "liberal" in every organization understands by now what must be done; what we really don't seem to know, however, is how to achieve our goals. Why can't we, for example, form a coalition to operate in the selection of candidates with a commitment to A. Philip Randolph's Freedom Budget in much the same way as we have sponsored anti-Vietnam candidates in Democratic primaries? Why can't we organize a coalition to force labor unions to abandon discriminatory practices?

Alas, the typical problem of the intellectual is how to attack the latest problem verbally. It's time for Rustin and Danzig to suggest to their supporters the methods of direct action to achieve their admirable goals.

(Dr.) BERNARD FLICKER
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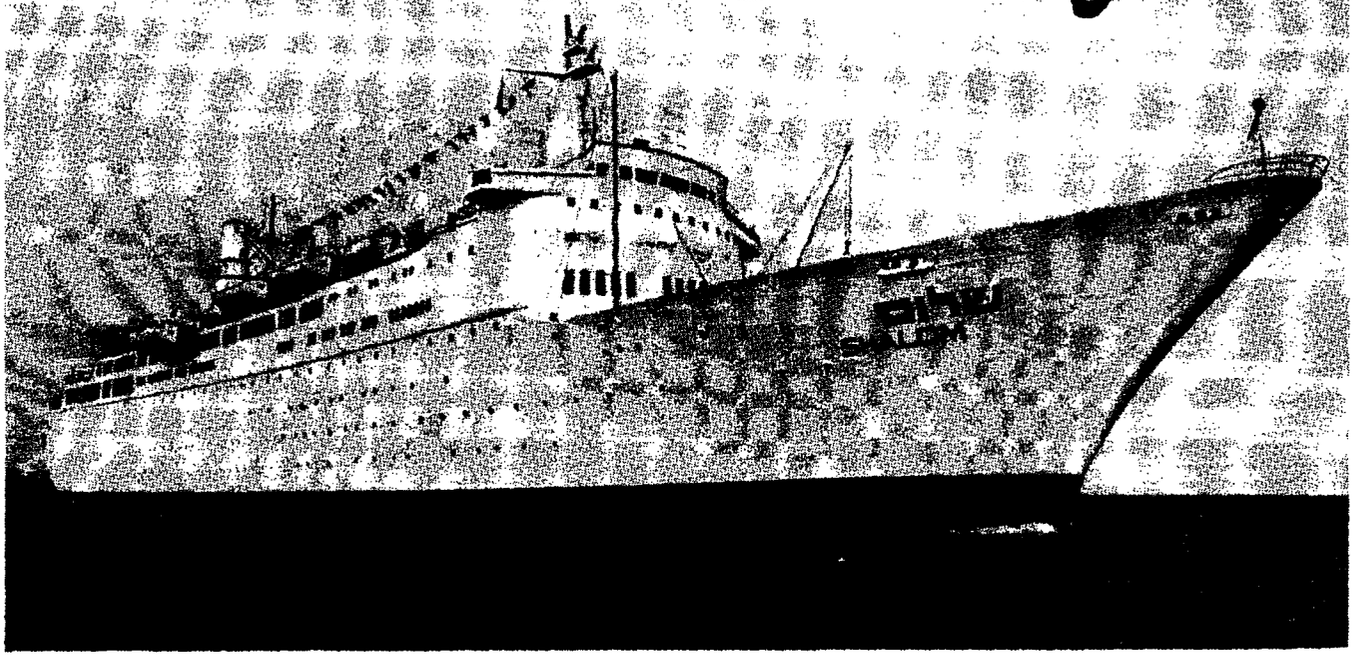

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . When he speaks of the civil-rights coalition being replaced by the Negro movement, David Danzig is tracing a new stage in the Negro revolution. When the Negro movement has completely superseded the old coalition, the Thermidorian reaction will have arrived. In the meantime, we must go through a (hopefully) short Jacobin period with Stokely Carmichael apparently playing the role of Robespierre. Perhaps liberals (both black and white) should not be overly sad that the open, creative, Girondist stage of the Negro revolution is over. Had we had history in mind, we would have known that the spirit of the early 60's could not last.

But of course we were hoping for much more from the Negro revolution, a transformation of the whole American way of life. Unfortunately, Negroes will not bring this regeneration about. Contrary to the unspoken but implicit hopes of liberals, Negroes are no better than white men, and no different.

Those who want this redemptive transformation will have to look for a new revolution. Where? Perhaps Stokely Carmichael has indicated the answer when he suggested that liberals concentrate on changing the white community.

Martin Luther King's open housing marches in Chicago have laid bare the depths of hatred prevalent among certain white ethnic groups. These people have rioted, but nobody seems to care why. . . . Perhaps liberals should find out what these second-generation ethnic groups are afraid of, what they want. Perhaps if we did something about their fears and their needs, we could accomplish some real victories in open housing. . . .

In the present, Jacobin phase of the Negro revolution, white liberals should not feel intimidated by Negro leaders who tell them to get out. We should speak our minds, but preferably *to* Negroes, rather than *about* them in publications of mass white circulation.

PETER B. DENISON
Somerset, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . For the past fifty years, the federal government has been assuming an increasing role in such matters as welfare, economic redistribution, the fostering of what is referred to as "social justice," etc. Yet the fact is, "Negroes today are in worse economic shape, live in worse slums, and attend more highly segregated schools than in 1954," a fact noted by Bayard Rustin himself.

Despite this glaring evidence of . . . the impracticality of federal reform, Rustin . . . never questions the propriety of the cures he believes necessary for the elimination of the Negroes' main problems. He believes, for example, without a sign of doubt, in the power of A. Philip Randolph's $100 billion Freedom Budget to resolve all problems. His proposed solutions include the programs of a $2.00 minimum wage, low cost housing, and guaranteed annual income.

This faith in the healing power of the policy of redistribution of wealth characterizes almost all social democrats and is not confined to those whose primary concern is the problems facing minorities. . . . Government programs, one after the other, are suggested to remedy the failures of previous government programs; at the same time study after study, conducted by highly competent (though not very popular) economists, demonstrates that . . . these programs accomplish absolutely nothing.

There is a visible progress from the advocacy of minimum checks on the free-market system of economics by the federal government (with the aim of improving the lot of the needy), to the now well-known proposals ranging from the Freedom Budget to the suggestions of the *Manifesto of the Triple Revolution*. Each of these measures is a remedy for the failings of previous measures; each of them fails miserably; but the most tragic aspect of all this is that each of the programs has been considered, analyzed, and dismissed as valueless by professional economists—*not* sociologists and planners—at the time of its theoretical inception.

Mr. Rustin and company continue to dispute the technical and mechanical features of their orthodox welfare-state schemes, without paying *any* attention to the suggestion that the fundamental assumptions of each of their successive proposals may be responsible for the failure to . . . ease the economic, social, and emotional plight of those whom they regard as oppressed by present standards.

As far as genuine alternative proposals are concerned, it would not damage Mr. Rustin's store of knowledge to investigate the pages of

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TIBOR R. MACHAN
Goleta, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The decline of Bayard Rustin as a philospher who is listened to by the black people, and the cause for that decline, are illustrated by his article. He does not see that his banner of liberalism cannot compete with the concept of "black power" in the struggle against racism. Its cerebral call . . . cannot stand against the visceral appeal of "we blacks."

"We people" could be such a counter-call. But Mr. Rustin's white liberal coalitionists are not about to adopt it. Their personal and collective fortunes are founded upon, and sustained by, institutions that thrive upon ethnic sectarianism. . . .

More power to "black power"! May they too learn the ways of other ethnic groups in wresting their share from the waspish society.

JOHN M. LAWRENCE
New York City

MR. DANZIG writes:

In response to Dr. Morsell's letter, I can only say that the facts as I stated them are taken from the New York *Times*. If there was a repudiation of the *Times* story by the NAACP, I unfortunately missed it.

The Jewish Faith

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I found the symposium on "The State of Jewish Belief" [August 1966] intensely interesting in its variety of points of view, emphasis, and personal styles.

NAHUM N. GLATZER
Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I want to compliment you on publishing the answers of various American rabbis to the five impor-

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tant questions you posed. I am sure your readers found these replies as interesting and stimulating as I did. I hope that you may soon pose other crucial questions concerning Jewish beliefs and observances so that your magazine will reflect the latest thinking of our spiritual leaders about the problems of great concern to every Jew. . . .

(Rabbi) JOSHUA J. ADLER
Congregation Chisuk Emuna
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

How could you possibly have expected to get a meaningful symposium on the state of Jewish belief by circularizing selected rabbis and other asserted "religionists"? Religion is far too important a matter to be left to rabbis.

The real question is this: Is God necessary or even relevant?

Who—after Auschwitz—really believes in the omnipotent One, the Lord our God, ruler of the world, from whom all goodness comes and to whom all thanks are due, our rock and our redeemer, with whom the chosen people made their covenant? . . .

Is God dead? Man, I didn't even know He was alive.

HENRY J. SHAMES
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I should like to correct one common error which crept into Milton Himmelfarb's introduction to your most provocative symposium. Describing most of the Orthodox participants in the symposium as standing on the *"Torah im Derekh Eretz"* principle (Torah, together with secular studies) of Samson Raphael Hirsch, Mr. Himmelfarb writes: "I say that most of the Orthodox rabbis here stand in Hirsch's tradition . . . because Hirsch was not only Rabbi Hirsch, he was also Dr. Hirsch."

That Hirsch never received the Ph.D. is recorded by Mordecai Breuer, headmaster of the Horeb Schools of Jerusalem (perpetuators of the *"Torah im Derekh Eretz"* philosophy in Eretz Israel). Mr. Breuer, a great-grandson of the late Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, is considered an expert on his renowned ancestor's life, work, and philosophy. He writes: "In 1829 Rabbi Hirsch spent a year at the University of Bonn on the Rhine. Historians and writers err when they invest him with the doctorate; this man, who later served as the archetype of the new genus, 'Rabbi-Doctor,' *did not acquire a Doctor's degree, nor did he even complete his academic studies* (italics mine). But a savoring of the spiritual life of the Gentile sages was essential for him before implementing his 'inner plan of life.'"

MELVIN A. PECK
Forest Hills, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"The State of Jewish Belief" in your August issue is an addition to the oral tradition. . . . Special supplements like these may even return a rabbi to his desk, with its books, commentaries, overflowing ashtray, and meditative glass of tea, and set him to ruminating on the language of God and the diction of men—instead of on mortgages and caterer-sexton labor troubles. . . .

MELVIN H. BERNSTEIN
Alfred, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

God may not yet be dead. But if the views expressed by your contributors to the symposium on the state of Jewish belief reflect those of His accredited spokesmen, then He is probably *in extremis*. From sheer boredom.

JOSEPH BERNSTEIN
Elmhurst, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Several interesting inferences may be drawn from your symposium:

(1) Not one of the respondents is involved primarily in Jewish education. Not only is the thinking of our youth not being moulded by the personality and the philosophy of any member of the respondent group, but only six men teach in rabbinical schools. . . .

(2) There seems to be a direct correlation between the traditionalism of the individual and the degree of his personal and intimate involvement with his religion.

(3) Hebrew language and literature is, *per se*, of little concern to these representatives of the Jewish community. This leaves us with the rather intriguing question of the nature of the Jewish program which it is vital to propagate and preserve.

MORTON J. MEROWITZ
Springfield, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"The State of Jewish Belief" should properly have been subtitled "Among College Professors." What I expected to find . . . was the state of belief of the entire

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What every creative person should know about writing for money

Here are interesting facts about full-time and part-time careers in writing — and how 12 Famous Writers are ready to help you get started

By Gordon Carroll

Writing today offers a life of financial reward, personal recognition and the freedom to live as you please. You can work full-time or part-time in a wide variety of challenging jobs. Or, if you prefer to write at home in your spare time, many opportunities are available to you. But . . . not everyone can or should become a writer. Before you decide to pursue a career in writing, here are some facts you should know about this challenging field.

How much can you earn?

Jobs for writers range all the way from $6,000 to $35,000 a year, depending on ability and experience. Staff writers on magazines are paid $7,000 to start and advance rapidly. Topnotch advertising writers can make as much as $30,000 a year. Editors with experience earn $15,000 a year; executive editors get much more. If you free-lance, you can sell your work to newspapers and magazines for fees up to $3,500.

What do top writers earn?

For those who reach the top, the rewards are truly substantial. Max Shulman received $250,000 just for the movie rights to one of his novels. Bruce Catton earned over $100,000 from his Civil War books. Rod Serling has a contract with a major television network that runs into six figures. Advertising consultant Mark Wiseman was paid $50,000 for a single ad campaign.

Can you live an independent life?

Certainly. As a free-lance author, you can live where you want and work on any schedule that suits you. J. D. Ratcliff, a leading article writer, works in the mornings and has his afternoons to relax. As a writer, you don't have to travel to work. And you can submit your stories and articles by mail.

Can you have job security?

Yes. In most large corporations, a number of offices along "executive row" are occupied by trained writers. You might be employed as a writer for a magazine, as a journalist, an advertising writer, a staff writer for a business firm. On these jobs, you enjoy a good salary, fringe benefits and full security — as in any other field.

Gordon Carroll has spent a lifetime helping writers break into print. He is a former editor of the *Reader's Digest*, *Time*, *Inc.* and *Coronet* — and has been Director of the Famous Writers School since its founding in 1960.

What are your major markets?

There are 1,100 book publishers turning out 12,000 new titles a year. There are 700 magazines — 11,000 newspapers — 12,000 trade publications — 500 radio and TV stations — 2,800 advertising agencies — 2,000 publicity firms. All are looking for writers.

What is the best age to write?

There isn't any "best age" for writing. You can begin when you're 18 or take up writing when you're 65. Truman Capote was an established author while still in his twenties. But Thomas B. Costain didn't begin until he was well into his fifties. Far more important than age is the willingness to learn.

Is writing for you?

Writing is *not* for everyone. You must have a basic aptitude to start and be willing to develop it. But if you possess this aptitude, you can learn the techniques of writing and seek a rewarding career. Twelve famous authors are ready to help you get started.

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Several years ago Bennett Cerf, Faith Baldwin, Rod Serling, Bruce Catton, Bergen Evans, Mignon G. Eberhart, John Caples, J. D. Ratcliff, Mark Wiseman, Max Shulman, Rudolf Flesch, and Red Smith joined forces to start the Famous Writers School; to help promising beginners acquire the skill it takes to break into print. They poured everything they knew about writing into a new kind of home-study course. The course begins with the principles of good writing. Then you get advanced training in the specialty of your choice — Fiction, Non-Fiction, Advertising or Business Writing.

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You write in your own home — on your own time — and send your lesson assignments to the School by mail. Here they receive the personal attention of professional writer-instructors who spend up to two hours on each assignment you submit. They go over your work line by line, word by word, blue-penciling their changes just as editors do with established authors. Then he returns it with a long letter of advice and guidance, on how to improve your writing.

Students sell their writing

Famous Writers students are successfully selling their work. Here are a few of them:

Doris Agee of San Mateo, California, sold a "Most Unforgettable Character" article to the *Reader's Digest*. "Without your training, the article never would have been written," she says. James Ruse of Rochester, New York, became editorial supervisor for publications at General Dynamics Corporation — "thanks to your wonderful training." Janice Ellen Brinkman of Springfield, Ohio, got a job as a copywriter at a local radio station. "I am sure it was this Course that got me the job," she says.

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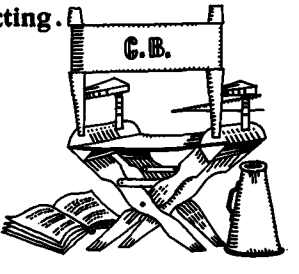

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spectrum of Jewish society. . . . The title didn't even suggest that the discussion was limited to a handful of academicians in the United States. I searched the articles in vain for a clue to the state of belief among, say, Jewish shoe salesmen, accountants, policemen, civil servants, . . . cabdrivers, secretaries, prisoners, diamond-cutters; we're out here, you know. And it might make an interesting study if someone documented the state of our belief.

WALTER MEYER
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I cannot praise your symposium too highly.

For one who is interested in the philosophical and theological aspects of Judaism, apart from its "Jewishness" aspects, as Milton Himmelfarb puts it, this symposium is the perfect textbook for study and discussion. . . .

(Rabbi) MORTIMER J. COHEN
Congregation Beth Sholom
Philadelphia, Pa.

Remembering T. S. Eliot

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is one thing to point out that T. S. Eliot was best as a literary influence, another to say, as Joseph Frank does in his review of *To Criticize the Critic* [September 1966], that "his relation to other [than literary] aspects of modern culture has always been purely and totally negative." I was reminded of three moments in my own experience. (1) Mid-40's: I'm seated at a long table at the Ministry of Food as a minor member of a deputation from "Save Europe Now." On my left is T. S. Eliot. It is true he is not happy. In fact he has under the table the new Thurber that I slipped him. But he is there. (2) Late 50's; scene: the Governor's conference room at Broadcasting House, where a deputation from the Sound Broadcasting Society is pleading for the Third Program. What gets everyone is not so much Olivier (for drama) or Tippett (for music) but T. S. Eliot gravely reading his prepared statement. (3) Early 60's; scene: T. S. Eliot's office in Russell Square: Eliot is putting some steam into a couple of us, about what to do next through the Viewers and Listeners Association that was trying to get the Third Channel for Public Service Television. He was still its pretty active president when he

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died. I am no apologist for Eliot's early touch of anti-Semitism. But—purely and totally negative . . . ?

ROY WALKER

Colchester, England

MR. FRANK writes:

I am grateful to Mr. Roy Walker both for putting down on paper the fleeting but evocative glimpses of T. S. Eliot that his letter contains, and also for giving me the opportunity to clarify a point in my review of *To Criticize the Critic.*

In stating that Eliot's relation to the modern world, except for its literature, was completely negative, I certainly did not intend to imply that, as a man and a citizen, Eliot had taken no part in the affairs of his time. Indeed, Eliot himself mentions wryly in the book that, like other members of his family, "I have felt, ever since I passed beyond my early irresponsible years, an uncomfortable and very inconvenient obligation to serve upon committees."

All this, however, was always in defense of those traditions that he still found alive in English and European culture, and which he felt it essential to help in preserving. My point was simply that he never expressed himself favorably about any new socio-cultural development in the modern world since the Renaissance, with the single and temporary exception, I believe, of Italian and British Fascism in the 1930's.

Canadian Writer

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Earl Berger's article on Canadian Jews brings to my mind the name of that enormously gifted Canadian-Jewish writer, . . . A. M. Klein ["The Un-American Jew," September 1966]. Poet, novelist, translator, Joyce scholar, and occasional ideologist, Klein has been neglected in recent years. . . .

Klein is still remembered in Canada among some Jews as well as in certain sectors of the non-Jewish community. My wife recalls an evening in the late 1950's when he lectured at Assumption College in Windsor on Gerard Manley Hopkins. After his formal lecture he was asked repeatedly by his predominantly Catholic audience to recite from his own Jewish poetry that many of his listeners knew by heart. My own memory . . . takes me back to a memorial evening for the martyrs of the Warsaw ghetto in Detroit in 1952 or thereabouts

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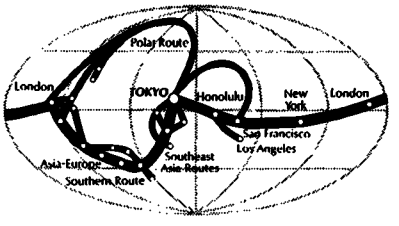

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when Klein, at midnight, and at the end of a typically exhausting Jewish program, held hundreds of men and women spellbound for a lecture that lasted an hour. . . .

JULIUS WEINBERG
Department of History
Cleveland State University
Cleveland, Ohio

Barth Defended

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I think it would be unfortunate if Robert Garis's thin-blooded "observations" on John Barth prevented anyone from reading *The Sot-Weed Factor* ["What Happened to John Barth?" October 1966]. . . .

Garis complains . . . about a possible mistake in a New York *Times* Book Review article which ascribed a running journal in the novel to "Captain James Smith." It was, said Garis triumphantly, really Sir Henry Burlingame's Journal; and the Captain James Smith journal was a different one.

Well, since Mr. Garis is being silly, the correct name in the book is "Captain John Smith." Of course, Garis has an easy out. He says that *The Sot-Weed Factor* is not a book that "encourages accurate reading." That's his problem. I have two children who read it when they were seventeen and nineteen and had no problem with it.

As for *The Sot-Weed Factor,* I think it's just about the best novel written in the United States since *Moby Dick*. Because it teems with satire, comedy, richness, boldness, and depth of language, it may have been a bit too overwhelming for a man who prefers the fleshless, drained, cerebral prose of Nabokov.

MARTIN SOLOW
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Robert Garis evidently belongs to that class of . . . pedants who, unable themselves to enjoy novels, must try to put to shame as unsophisticated others who do. The fact that a non-lover of Swift unfavorably compares Barth to Swift is hardly an interesting basis for criticism of two provocative and totally entertaining novels.

ALLAN J. TOBIN
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Mr. Garis terms *Giles Goat-Boy* a "pseudo-adaptation of the Swift of *Gulliver's Travels.*" Having neatly placed the novel in its proper slot, it no longer becomes

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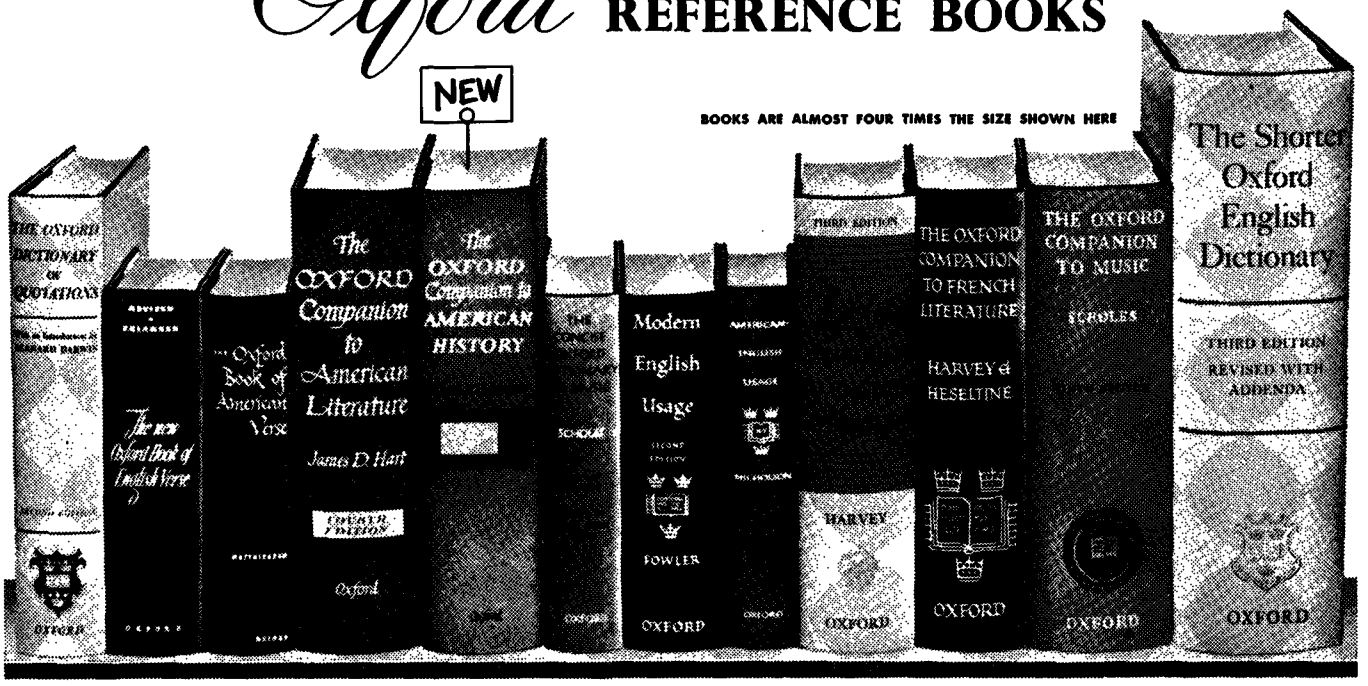
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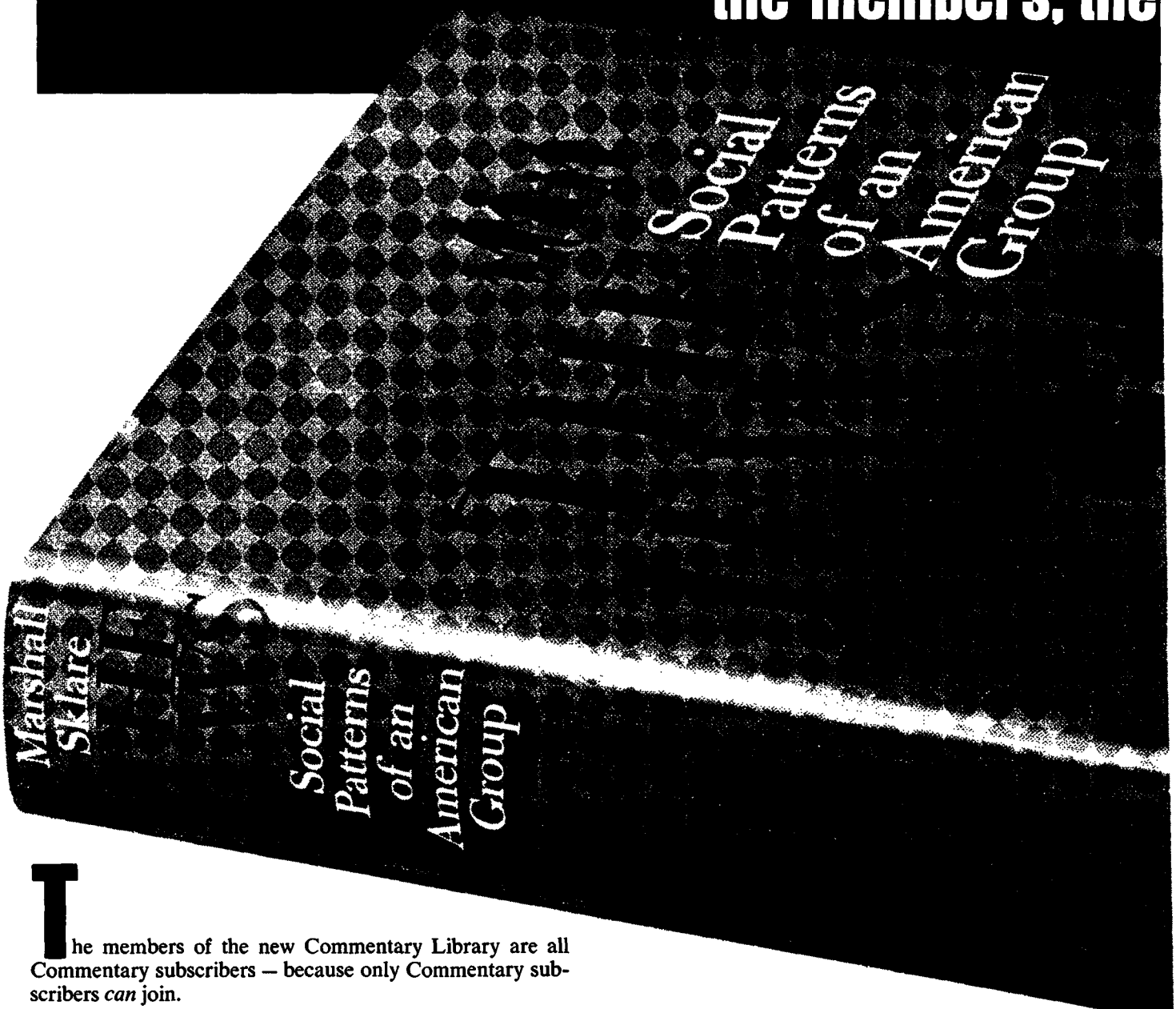

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necessary for him to see what the work says and how it manages to say it. The very passage Mr. Garis quotes, which he judges as "self-conscious high style," and to which he assigns a B-grade seems to be strikingly fresh poetic prose.

Mr. Garis allows himself to become involved in the business of identifying characters and places, and reduces the novel to a matter of substituting one term for another. But Barth's concern with our identifying his characters' counterparts is a minor one. . . . The identifications are there to heighten the impact of the novel by supplying the reader with a frame of reference to his own world.

Finally, Mr. Garis misses the intent of Barth's allegory. . . . The Doctrine is not intended as a revelation to the reader, because Barth does not pretend to be the new Messiah. Rather, it is there to clothe Barth's statement that man is incapable of receiving any new doctrine because of his spiritual blindness and moral impotence.

HOWARD GOLDBERG
Sayville, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Robert Garis has read *Giles Goat-Boy*—like most of the other critics of the work—only on the level of its superstructure. On this level, the result can appear to be little more than an overly-contrived jaunt into highbrow science fiction. . . .

Only when one looks below the surface icing is it clear that Barth has opposed a Christian superstructure to a pagan substructure. The richness of the work lies in the balance achieved between a Christian cosmogony . . . and a pagan substructure in which the role of archetypal hero determines everything that happens and much that otherwise would seem episodic, mere mystification, or elaborate joke.

Barth offers his first clues in the title. *Giles Goat-Boy* suggests not only St. Giles, patron saint of cripples (and the archetypal hero is always crippled), but the Greek derivation of Aegis, the shield made from the goat that fostered Zeus, and also Aegisthus, the Greek hero raised among goats. . . .

Barth owes his greatest debt to Lord Raglan's *The Hero*, which virtually furnishes all the keys needed to understand the book. . . .

Raglan outlines twenty-two features of the archetypal hero pattern from an obscure birth and crippled feet to death on a hilltop. Oedipus meets twenty-one of the criteria, and Barth is careful to permit his goat-boy no more, but he also gives him the one feature Oedipus lacks—the role of lawmaker through his New Revised Syllabus.

Barth's subsurface theme is most explicitly stated halfway through the novel in what appears to be one of his many diversions in plot action: a New Tammany College staging of Sophocles's *Oedipus*. Giles resembles Oedipus more closely than some of the other archetypal heroes upon which Barth has modeled him. His relationship with his mother drives her mad, and he short-circuits WESCAC, his computer father. He also lives the riddle of the Sphinx . . . by walking first on four legs as a goat, then on two and finally on three legs (holding a staff) as he enters the University.

. . . Only when *Giles Goat-Boy* is read on both these levels does it become clear how fully the work elaborates the struggles between the animal and divine in man's nature—an idea only toyed with in the Christian superstructure. While all questions at New Tammany College are multiple choice, there are indeed answers, and Barth's demand upon the reader is that he seek them out. To date, all reviewers have been curiously lazy.

HARRY LAWTON
Riverside, California

MR. GARIS writes:

Mr. Solow has caught me out fairly and embarrassingly. As for what he and the other correspondents offer in the way of interpretation or assessment of Barth, it seems to me that none of it brings any serious question against the points I made, which still seem to me the central ones.

Hess as Socialist

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have just read Jonathan Frankel's article in which he mentions my volume, *Moses Hess: Prophet of Zionism* ["Moses Hess: the Communist Rabbi," June 1966]. Permit me to point out a few inaccuracies in his comments.

Mr. Frankel writes: "Her account of Hess's relation to the German socialist movement is superficial, and her attempts to disassociate Marx from Hess lead her off course. She says that Hess disassociated himself from the Socialist movement after the 1848 revolutions."

Since Hess's fame rests on his dual role as a mentor of Marx and

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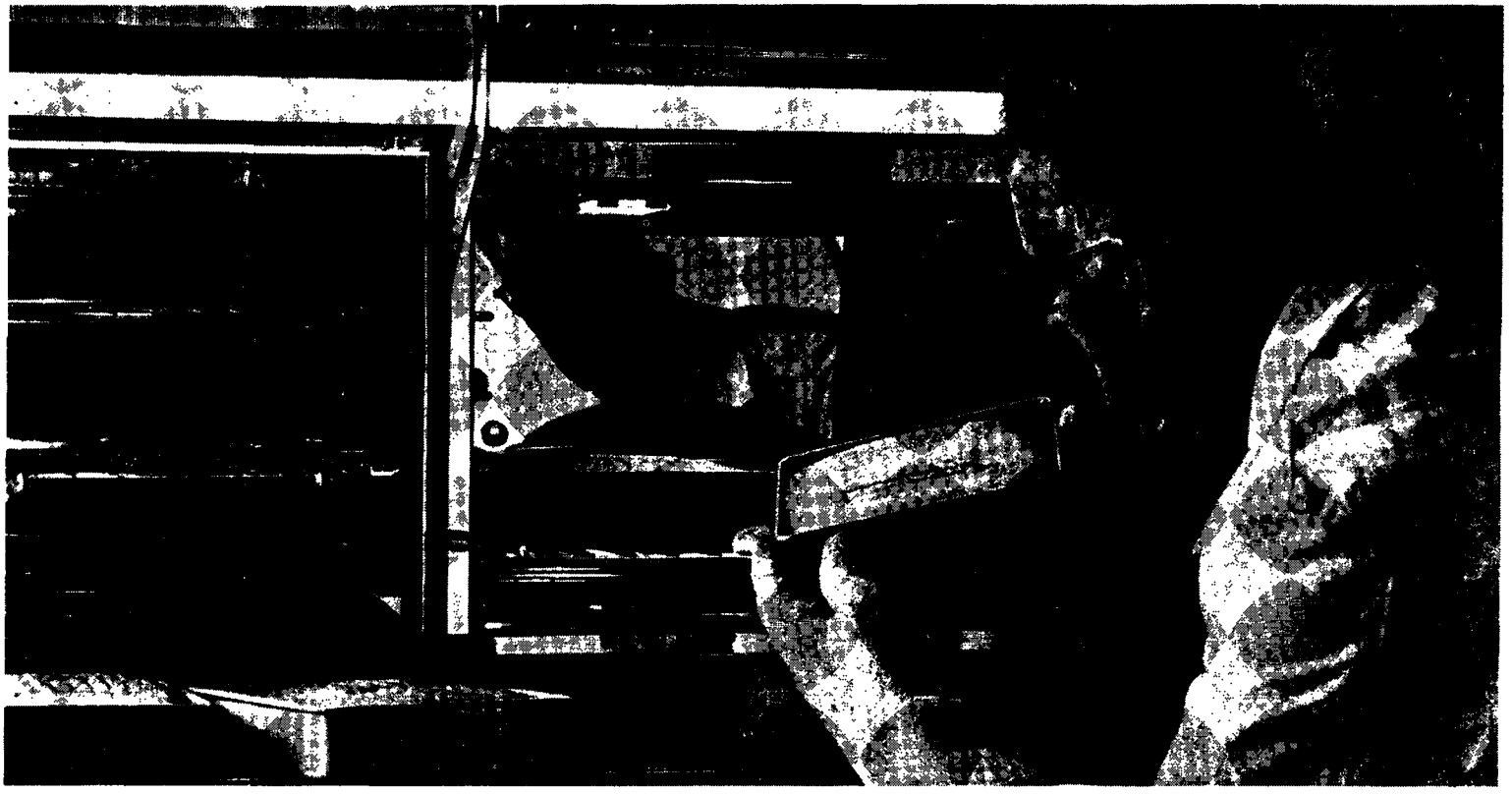

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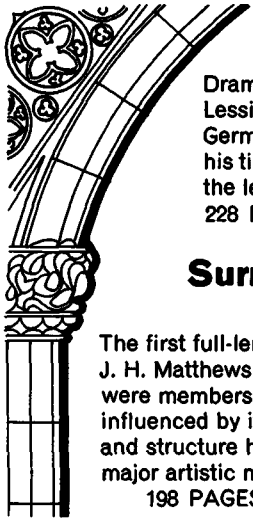

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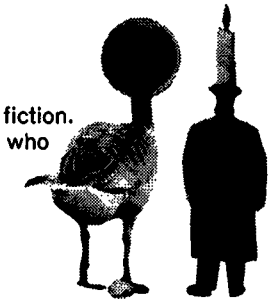

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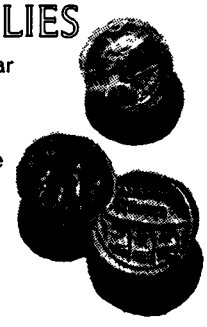

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as a prophet of Zionism, any socialist writing about him would stress his socialism (like Lukacs), while a Zionist would similarly stress his Zionism, while not omitting due reference to the socialist phase of his life. As a Zionist, I favor the latter approach.

According to my investigations, Hess's socialism did not terminate in 1848, and my volume bears this out. His dual interest in socialism and in Jewish nationalism occupied his attention during his entire lifetime, with one or the other alternately dormant—hence his ambivalence. . . . After the Damascus Affair of 1840, his writing already showed his belief in the indestructibility of the Jewish people. "We shall always be strangers among the nations," he wrote at that time. But his brother socialists showed scant sympathy with this concern, and it was suspended temporarily, only to be revived at a more propitious time. . . .

Hess did not leave socialism in 1848. It was only his *relation to Marx and Engels* that ended in 1848, as well as his influence upon the course of Marxism. This rift was initiated by Marx. In 1847, when Marx purged Weitling from the party, Hess resigned in disgust at Marx's methods, "wanting nothing more to do with such fellow socialists" [as Marx and Engels]. Nor did Marx succeed in purging Hess also. Though Marx had organized the Workers' Educational Alliance, it was Hess who was elected its president. In 1848 Engels, upon Marx's instigation, tricked Hess by substituting his own Preface to the Communist Manifesto for Hess's, to be presented at the 1848 London Conference. The rupture was now complete.

That he remained an active socialist was further to be seen in 1864 when Ferdinand Lassalle, the President of the German Social Democratic party, was shot in a duel. The presidency was then offered to Hess as the "custodian of socialism," for he had been helping Lassalle build a socialist stronghold in the Rhineland. But, Hess, old by now, and no longer interested, refused. Now the way was clear for Marx to become leader of the German party. Now, too, Hess's role as "Communist rabbi" was over.

Nowhere in my book do I imply that Hess's interest in the natural sciences interfered with his socialism. Nor is it true that this study bore no relation to anti-Semitism. Though it may not have been

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called anti-Semitism at that time, persecution of Jews always concerned Hess. His study of the natural sciences alone did not lead him to his Zionist philosophy. It was the sum total of all his other studies that had led him to his philosophy of the Historical Sabbath of the Social Sphere. Instead of studying one or another subject in isolation from all others, he studied all disciplines as an integral whole. His was a catholic mind and his interests were catholic. . . . and out of the sum total of all his interests came his synthesis of socialism-Zionism. . . .

Thus, I wrote my book from a Zionist point of view, to place Hess in his proper niche as a philosopher, whose ideas served as the basis for modern Zionism. But at the same time, I did not minimize his proper role in the socialist development of his day. The basis of his Zionism lay in his belief in a non-mechanistic socialism that would lead to the Historical Sabbath of a brotherhood of nations living in peace according to the principles of social justice.

It is said that Marx's hate drove Hess further and further from cosmopolitanism and finally, by 1861, persuaded him to come closer to his people. But the process was a gradual one, not the result of a sudden decision made in 1848. The fact that the socialist-Zionists later accepted his philosophy as their basis, irrefutably bears out my thesis.

(Mrs.) MARY SCHULMAN
New York City

MR. FRANKEL writes:

Mrs. Schulman is, of course, right when she says that Hess had "a catholic mind and his interests were catholic." This was the theme of my article and I was critical of those passages of Mrs. Schulman's book in which she clearly ignored this fact, letting Hess the Zionist crowd Hess the socialist out of the picture. In her book she wrote: "After the failure of the 1848 Revolution, Hess severed himself from his fellow socialists and began to occupy himself instead with the wave of anti-Semitism that had followed in the wake of political reaction. His mind had been weaned away from its concern with the European proletariat . . . ." I assume that Mrs. Schulman does not wish to defend this statement and others like it, for in her letter she justly makes much of the fact that Hess maintained his attachment to the European socialist movement for some twenty years after the revolution. However, even now her description of his break with Marx as "complete" in 1848 seems to me to be overly schematic. Hess always remained somewhat in awe of Marx, the socialist seer, and never built

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his own ideas into a coherent doctrine, overtly opposed to Marxism. Thus, it was Marx whom he took as the ultimate authority in his attack on Herzen in the 1850's. Finally, while nobody would deny that anti-Semitism preoccupied Hess at various stages of his life and was central to his *Rome and Jerusalem* of 1862, this fact in itself does not substantiate Mrs. Schulman's original suggestion that in the 1850's he made the study of anti-Semitism his major interest. But here again, she seems to have retreated from an untenable position.

Forum for Dissent

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I much enjoyed Maurice Goldbloom's "The Fulbright Revolt" [September 1966] and thought it most interesting and well done.

(Sen.) CLAIBORNE PELL
United States Senate
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Mr. Goldbloom's article was most interesting and well written. I especially appreciated the historical perspective from which he wrote.

. . . My only quarrel would be with his last few paragraphs where he seems to suggest that the Committee is acting out of vindictiveness when it undertakes to make substantial changes in the aid program. As a matter of fact, the Committee for some years has tried to get the AID people to limit voluntarily the number of countries receiving one kind or another of American aid. The theory is that aid should be concentrated, is not a tool in every ambassador's kit, and may sometimes hurt U.S. policy more than it helps. The argument that aid leads to deeper involvement is, of course, one of the factors which has influenced the Committee. . . .

CARL MARCY
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C.

MR. GOLDBLOOM writes:

I certainly did not intend to suggest that the Committee was motivated by vindictiveness in its approach to the Foreign Aid Bill. Rather, I indicated my belief that an understandable feeling of frustration, in the face of the administration's impermeability to reason, has sometimes produced a distorted perspective on the issues involved.

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THE AMERICAN CRISIS
Vietnam, Cuba & the Dominican Republic

THEODORE DRAPER

IN THE PAST six years the United States has resorted to some form of military force in three major crises—in Cuba, in the Dominican Republic, and in Vietnam. They are sufficiently different to make it foolhardy to lump them together. Nevertheless, in one respect, they resemble each other too closely and uncomfortably to be regarded as totally unrelated or dissimilar.

What was there in each of these crises that made necessary the use of military force, if only by proxy, on the part of the United States? If we look at the development of each one, does a pattern emerge and suggest that they have something fundamental in common? And if we can detect a pattern, what does it tell us about where we are heading and what we may find on the way?

The more I have struggled with these questions, the more I have come to believe that there is such a pattern, and that it has brought us to the point of armed force as the key instrument of policy no less than three times in only six years. If I am right, this pattern implies that we have been living with an American crisis, or more exactly an ever more acute and costly crisis in American foreign policy, of which the Cuban, the Dominican, and the Vietnam cases have been three incarnations. If countries so far apart and so different can bring forth essentially the same problem, that problem must be as much in us as in them.

This American crisis can be simply stated, though its manifestations are far more difficult and complicated to trace. Roughly, the main instrumentalities of a country's foreign policy are political, economic, and military. It is, of course, not possible to seal them off from each other, as if they existed in isolation or alone. Nevertheless, they can surely be distinguished from each other; they may be used in different combinations and in different degrees.

At the present time, for example, the United States and France use all three instrumentalities. But the relatively modest economic and military means at President de Gaulle's disposal constrains French influence to be largely political. Our chief methods of persuasion, on the contrary, have increasingly become economic and military, and at crucial moments, almost exclusively military.

This pattern of American policy has come about as a result of one political failure and frustration after another. A weaker power might have suffered them in silence or in angry self-recrimination. But the United States is too rich and powerful to take a political setback without seeking some other way to break the deadlock. It is able, if it wishes, to transmute the political problem into an economic or, as a last resort, a military operation.

It is from this point of view that I wish to call attention to some aspects of the Cuban and Dominican crises as an introduction to a more extended consideration of how we got so deeply enmeshed in the Vietnam war.

II

THE TRANSMUTATION from the political to the military may be followed from beginning to end in the case of Cuba.

The political problem arose on March 10, 1952, the day Fulgencio Batista overthrew a duly elected, constitutional government in the midst of an election campaign he was sure to lose. The United States soon recognized Batista's regime, and the following year sent to Havana an ambassador whose enthusiasm for the new order struck even Batista as somewhat excessive. For almost four years, the State Department under John Foster Dulles supported Batista unwaveringly and thereby dismayed all elements of the democratic opposition which was seeking some peaceful way to return to constitutionalism.

In 1957, a change of ambassadors gave the State Department a second chance to deal with the political problem. The new ambassador was instructed to make the U.S. position more nearly neutral in internal Cuban politics. But, after a brave start, he was more impressed by the growing threat of Fidel Castro's forces than by the dangers attendant on humoring Batista. As a result, no real change took place in American policy. It was still tied to Batista on the ground that any move which might weaken him would play into the hands of Castro and/or the Communists. Until 1958, there was plenty of non-Castro and anti-

THEODORE DRAPER's "The Dominican Crisis: A Case Study in American Policy" in our December 1965 issue attracted worldwide attention and also won a Sidney Hillman Award for that year. In addition to books on American Communism and Castro's Cuba, Mr. Draper has written a political-military study of the French defeat of 1940, *The Six Weeks' War* (Viking, 1944).

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Castro opposition to Batista but it was never able to make much headway against Batista's police and American discouragement.

As one democratic group after another met with disaster or disappointment, Castro picked up the pieces. His preeminence dated from 1958 or 1957 at the earliest. In effect, the United States had had at least five or six years to head him off, and could have done so easily, if it had not put all its eggs in Batista's political basket.

In the pinch, Batista left everyone, including the United States, in the lurch. When he fled at the end of 1958, he was still far superior to Castro in military force. His regime broke down for political and social far more than for military reasons; his own henchmen would no longer fight for him and not a few of them in high places sold out to Castro; and he betrayed most of them by taking flight without warning.

Until 1959, then, the Cuban problem was primarily political. It took the form of that crucial political question: *Which side are you on?* All the economic and military aid we gave Batista's regime counted as nothing compared with the answer we gave to this question.

When Castro took over Havana in January of that year, a new American policy had to be erected on a foundation of total political bankruptcy. Fear, failure, and guilt haunted the first confused, hesitant American overtures to the new Cuban regime. At this point, American policymakers could think of nothing better than to trade economics for politics. I am inclined to believe that the Eisenhower administration would have been glad to buy itself out of its embarrassment. But Castro refused to let it off so easily. Though Castroite circles spread the tale that Washington officials had rudely turned down Castro's requests for economic and financial aid, the truth was far more "revolutionary"—not only was Castro unwilling to accept anything which implied continued Cuban economic dependence on the United States, but he was determined to break the economic ties which had bound Cuba to the United States.

Once the economic bait had slipped off the hook, the Eisenhower administration went on fatally to the next and last option—military action. As early as April 1959, former Vice President Richard M. Nixon advocated training Cuban exile forces to overthrow Castro, and this step was actually taken by the Eisenhower administration in March 1960, though no concrete plan was made or adopted at that time. President John F. Kennedy inherited this exile force in 1961, and its very existence tipped the balance in the debate over whether to use it or not. It is sometimes forgotten, however, that Kennedy's thinking on the Cuban problem before he took office was not very different from that of his predecessor or his Presidential opponent.

The Bay of Pigs adventure was a military failure. But even a military victory would not have changed the fundamental fact that it was made necessary by, and was intended to recoup, the losses sustained by ten years of political failure.

This was the real meaning of the Bay of Pigs, though it has been obscured by the fruitless debate over who or what was most responsible for the military fiasco. It would have been far more profitable if the debate had been less over why military victory evaded us than why we needed it at all. The United States had possessed such overwhelming political and economic influence in Cuba for so many years that a resort to force could only mean an admission of political insolvency.

The "missiles crisis" in October the following year did not change the Cuban problem in any essential. President Kennedy carefully staged the showdown with the Soviet Union as a military confrontation of a limited character. The removal of Soviet missiles in Cuba did not represent an advance by the United States so much as a retreat by the Soviet Union. All the United States demanded and succeeded in re-establishing was the *status quo ante*. This operation was far more military than political, though it was not without U.S.-Soviet political repercussions.

In terms of the Cuban problem, however, the "missiles crisis" had an unexpected denouement. The prestige gained by Mr. Kennedy in October 1962 actually enabled him to execute a political retreat in Cuban policy in the spring of 1963. The existing instrument of U.S. policy, the Cuban Revolutionary Council, headed by Dr. José Miró Cardona, was abandoned, and a sizable corps of Cuban exiles was unceremoniously removed from the CIA's payroll. Not a few of these victims came to me in that period with their tales of woe. They were bitter and humiliated for two reasons—that they had taken the checks, and that they were no longer getting them. The demobilization of the Council signified that four more years of political bankruptcy in our Cuban policy had come to an end.

Ironically, this was the best thing that could have happened. Our fortunes immediately improved by permitting Castro to make mistakes without being able to blame them altogether on us.

III

THE SAME political-military pattern can easily be discerned in the Dominican Republic.

The Dominican instrument of U.S. policy, Donald Reid Cabral, was another beneficiary of a military coup. The constitutional government of Juan Bosch was overthrown in September 1963; Reid, more a businessman than a politician, assumed the leadership of the new regime that December and headed the provisional government for the sixteen months before the revolt of April 1965.

In these months, more U.S. money was poured

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into the Dominican Republic than ever before. But it availed little because Reid was beset politically from two sides—the Right which wanted to replace him, and the Left which wanted to replace the Right. By January 1965, three months before the revolt, any reader of the Dominican press would or should have known that Reid was virtually finished. The reason was not so much what was taking place on the Left as what was happening on the Right. The traditional right-wing politicians saw no reason why he, a relatively late interloper in Dominican politics, without a party or a cause, should be the sole beneficiary of U.S. largesse and support. When Reid intimated in December 1964 that he did not intend to give up power by staying out of the elections scheduled for June 1965, as tradition demanded, the right wing unleashed a furious political offensive against him personally and against the U.S. embassy for backing him. The pro-Bosch military conspiracy was able to get rid of Reid so easily because he had previously been deserted by the Right and had been left suspended in a political vacuum.

Thus, in the months before the revolt, the same decisive political question was posed in the Dominican Republic: *Which side are you on?* The answer, given clearly and loftily by the U.S. Ambassador, W. Tapley Bennett, Jr., and his Washington superiors was: Donald Reid Cabral. Not that they were unaware of the deteriorating situation. But Washington's remedy for the disease was even more tangible support for Reid Cabral. As usual, this took an economic form; the last half of another $10,000,000 loan from the Bank for International Development was announced in the Dominican press two days before the revolt.

The bankruptcy of this policy was revealed at 10 A.M. on April 25, the morning after the revolt. Reid Cabral appealed to the United States and to the Dominican military to support him—in vain. Neither wished the revolt to succeed, but neither was willing to fight for Reid Cabral. When Reid Cabral was tossed aside, the United States had no *political* alternative to take his place. All that remained was military action, by the Dominican armed forces or by the United States.

We now know that the Dominican Air Force decided to fight by 3 P.M. on April 25. The first air attack was carried out an hour and a half later. But before the Dominican military leaders made up their minds, they asked the U.S. embassy what they could expect from the United States. The U.S. Chargé d'Affaires, William B. Connett, Jr., who handled the exchange in the absence of Ambassador Bennett, told the Dominican military to go ahead with their plans. In effect, the United States first tried to stifle the revolt through the Dominican armed forces. But three days later, the Dominican military had to admit failure because, as Colonel Pedro Bartolomé Benoit, head of the first military junta, later explained, planes were not enough to put down the revolt and "we did not have the troops."* Inasmuch as the Dominican armed forces and national police numbered about forty thousand, this was quite a confession to make of the real reason for U.S. military intervention on April 28. The Dominican and U.S. military actions were two sides of the same coin, two stages in the same process.

The point I am trying to make has little to do with the question that is still hotly debated—whether the Dominican Republic was actually threatened by a Communist takeover in the first week of the revolt. Even if the fifty-three to seventy-seven Communists on the State Department's various lists could have "taken over and really seized" the country, as President Johnson claimed, the deeper problem is this: How could such a takeover have come about so quickly and easily after sixteen months of Reid Cabral's U.S.-backed regime? Why did this regime fall apart, with no one willing to defend it, even before the fighting had broken out? Why did the United States invest so heavily in a political house of cards?

Much, or even most, of the controversy about the Cuban and Dominican crises tends to be confined to their terminal stages, when immediate, hasty, drastic decisions had to be made under stress of seemingly imminent disaster. Such decisions belong to the closing-the-barn-door-after-the-political-horse-has-been-stolen department. The problem that concerns us here antedates these decisions and, therefore, requires a larger historical perspective. That is why I have gone back to 1952 in Cuba and to 1963 in the Dominican Republic in order to see how we made the transition from the political to the military. And I have recalled these cases because they have a direct bearing on the present war in Vietnam.

IV

FROM THIS point of view, the Vietnam war is only the Cuban and Dominican crises writ large.

In 1954, when the French faced defeat, President Eisenhower declared that he "could conceive of no greater tragedy than for the United States to become involved in an all-out war in Indochina," of which Vietnam was then a part. How did we get so far that, toward the end of 1966, the same man could advocate "putting in the kind of military strength we need to win," not excluding the possibility of nuclear weapons?†

In 1963, two months before his assassination, President John F. Kennedy said: "In the final analysis, it is their war. They are the ones to win it or lose it. We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisers, but they have to win it—the people of Vietnam—against the Communists." How did it become, three years later, "our" war which we must win at all costs?

* *El Tiempo* (New York), July 10, 1966.
† *U.S. News & World Report*, November 7, 1966, p. 42.

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In March 1964, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara said that "the large indigenous support that the Vietcong receives means that solutions must be as political and economic as military. Indeed, there can be no such thing as a purely 'military' solution to the war in South Vietnam." Less than three years later, why are we heading in the direction of a purely "military solution"?

In 1964 also, President Lyndon B. Johnson protested: "We don't want to get tied down in a land war in Asia." And more: "We are not about to send American boys nine or ten thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys should be doing for themselves." Only two years later, we were getting tied down in a land war in Asia, and we were sending American boys nine or ten thousand miles away to do what Asian boys should have been doing. How? And why?

WHEN THE course of our increasing absorption into the Vietnam struggle from 1954 to the present is studied, the central fact that emerges is this: political failure paved the way for every step on the road to full-scale military engagement. An examination of five turning points—October 1954, December 1961, November 1963, February 1965, and October 1966—makes this clear.

The first Vietnamese instrument of U.S. policy was the late Ngo Dinh Diem. He took office just before the Geneva Agreements of 1954 brought to an end the war waged by the Vietnamese Communists under Ho Chi Minh against French colonial rule. Diem, a long-time exile, had not taken part in this struggle, but he had spent some time in the United States before the French collapse, making friends in high places and impressing a variety of Americans, official and unofficial, that he was a man of nationalist political ideals and progressive social convictions. Of all the things former President Eisenhower has regretted putting down on paper, the list may well be topped by the admission in his memoirs that all knowledgeable persons agreed that "had elections been held as of the time of the fighting, possibly 80 per cent of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader rather than Chief of State Bao Dai," under whom Diem first served.*

It is still important to keep in mind how the war ended in 1954 because it helps to explain the Communists' bitterness and doggedness today. Ho Chi Minh made far-reaching concessions in 1954, possibly under Soviet pressure, as Professor P. J. Honey asserts. Ho's victory over the French was decisive, but he agreed to take over only half the country, undoubtedly in the expectation that the South, then in seeming chaos, would soon fall of its own accord into his hands. One of the Geneva agreements, agreed to by all those present but signed by none, provided for general elections to unify the country in July 1956. Though there is reason to believe that no one, including the Communists, took this commitment very seriously, it gave the new regime in South Vietnam a breathing spell of two years. In short, the Communists have been fighting since 1954 to win back what they and everyone else thought they had already won. They had hardly intended to have Diem, who had contributed nothing to the victory, reap its fruits. In 1954, Ho Chi Minh snatched compromise out of the jaws of victory; today, the United States is afraid that he will snatch victory out of the jaws of compromise. In any case, this odd background makes Vietnam unique in Communist bids for power. It is hard to imagine the same chain of events elsewhere.

From the American side, a portentous decision was made in 1954. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was unhappy about the French willingness to negotiate with Ho Chi Minh and get out of Indochina. When he could not dissuade the French, or persuade the British, the Eisenhower administration was compelled to face the crucial question: What was all of Indochina, let alone its Vietnamese part, worth? Full-scale U.S. ground and air intervention to take over where the French left off was carefully considered in 1954. An Army team of experts was sent to Indochina to study all the ramifications of a major intervention. The need for eight infantry divisions, plus about thirty-five engineer battalions, was projected. Everything that is happening today was foreseen then, as Lt. Gen. James M. Gavin made clear at the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Hearings last February.†

* I do not cite this statement as evidence of how democratic Ho Chi Minh might have been. He might have taken power democratically, but he would not have kept power democratically, which is far more important. In 1960, the "elections" in North Vietnam resulted in a 99.8 per cent majority for the ruling Communist party and its two small satellite groups, with no one permitted to run on an opposition platform. For this reason, it is fatuous to imagine that Vietnam would have been more "democratic" if Ho Chi Minh had been permitted to get an 80 per cent majority in a national election, as provided for by the Geneva Agreements. The only reason for citing Mr. Eisenhower's statement is that it underlines the unique character of the Vietnam problem. In what other country could a Communist leader have been assured of an 80 per cent sweep in a free election?

† In his memoirs, *Mandate for Change* (1963), Eisenhower gives the impression that the United States contemplated large-scale intervention only in the event of Chinese support for Ho Chi Minh's forces, and that he needed little dissuading on any other grounds. If we trust Generals Ridgway and Gavin, this version was not entirely candid. Ridgway had already written in his memoirs, *Soldier* (1956), that "we *very nearly* found ourselves involved in a bloody jungle war in which our nuclear capability would have been almost useless" (my italics, T.D.). He records that "individuals of great influence, both in and out of government," raised the cry for U.S. intervention "to come to the aid of France with arms" (pp. 275-277). Gavin confirmed Ridgway and added details in his 1966 testimony (*The Vietnam Hearings*, Vintage Books, pp. 67-69). According to the new biography of Senator Fulbright by Tristram Coffin, Senators Lyndon Johnson and Richard Russell told Mr. Fulbright that Dulles and Nixon favored a plan by Admiral A. W. Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to bolster the French by attacking a major supply area close to the Chinese frontier with atomic weapons (Dutton, p. 232).

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The chief opposition to any large-scale U.S. intervention in Vietnam in 1954 came, it appears, from two professional soldiers, General Matthew B. Ridgway, then the Army's Chief of Staff, and General James M. Gavin, its Chief of Plans and Development. Together with the British, whose leaders were less inhibited about challenging American foreign policy than they are today, they persuaded President Eisenhower that we could hold on to Indochina but that it was not worth the price we would have to pay for it. And both generals were substantially of the same view twelve years later. The moral of this story is twofold: distinguished and honorable U.S. generals have differed on the strategic value of Vietnam; and generals once held us back from plunging into the conflict on a large scale. This should warn us that our official view of the importance of Vietnam may be as different tomorrow as it was yesterday.

The American solution in 1954 was a compromise between extremes—one demanding full military intervention, the other complete abstention. To the question of which side it was on, the Eisenhower administration answered unequivocally—Diem's. It backed up this political commitment with a maximum of economic aid and a minimum of military assistance, at least in manpower. The American gamble was held down by the implicit understanding that the United States was willing to help Diem's regime only if it proved capable of helping itself. In October 1954, President Eisenhower sent President Diem a letter in which he explicitly stated the conditional nature of this support.* It was a policy of limited liability and, in principle, it set the pattern until 1965.

We might be better off today if our political leaders had been as clairvoyant about our own problems as they were about the French. I have already cited former President Eisenhower's well-known dictum about Ho Chi Minh's chances in a 1954 election. The sentence in his memoirs immediately preceding has attracted much less attention but may be far more meaningful for the present. It reads: "I am convinced that the French could not win the war because the internal political situation in Vienam, weak and confused, badly weakened their military position."

This is no less true of the United States, with the addition of something else for which the French were not strong enough: our military position has been strengthened every time the internal political situation in Vietnam has weakened.

V

THIS GENERAL RULE can best be seen in operation during the seven years that separated the first and second turning-points in American policy.

When Ngo Dinh Diem took over the shell of an administration and an economy left by the French in 1954, he was not expected to be able to fulfill the conditions posed by President Eisenhower's offer of aid. In fact, Diem was not expected to stay in power very long—perhaps a few months. He seemed to have little or nothing to work with on the Vietnamese side, and the French, still there, were soon out to get rid of him. But with American economic and political support, Diem surprised everyone. He cracked down successfully on the politically-minded sects and their private armies in the spring of 1955; he eliminated the French puppet chief of state, Bao Dai, and made himself an all-powerful President in October of that year; the French pulled out completely by July 1956. In two years, Diem seemed to have performed a minor miracle by consolidating his power around himself, his family, and his Catholic co-religionists.

In these two years, when he was weakest, Diem had least trouble with the Communists. Two reasons appear to account for this truce-like atmosphere. Ho Chi Minh had no more faith than anyone else in Diem's chances of survival, and despite their own cynicism about it, the anonymously promised general election in July 1956 may have sufficiently intrigued the Communist leaders to give them a reason for adopting a "wait and see" attitude in the South. Moreover, Ho Chi Minh was just then consolidating his own rule in the North. His methods in 1954-56 were every bit as ruthless and brutal as any used in China or Soviet Russia at their worst. At least fifty thousand and possibly one hundred thousand peasants were physically exterminated in the North Vietnamese "land reform" of those years. A virtual peasant rebellion broke out in one Northern province in November 1956.† This upheaval gave Ho Chi Minh more than enough to do in the North, but it indicates what would have happened in the South if Ho had been given the opportunity to get his 80 per cent majority there.

Diem, then, treated the Communists just as roughly as they would have treated everyone else. From the outset, he made clear that he did not

* The American aid program was contemplated, the letter said, "provided that your Government is prepared to give assurances as to the standards of performance it would be able to maintain in the event such aid were supplied." The American offer, it went on, was intended to make the Government of Vietnam "a strong viable state, capable of resisting attempted subversion or aggression through military means. The Government of the United States expects that this aid will be met by performance on the part of the Government of Vietnam in undertaking needed reforms." Yet this letter of October 23, 1954 has been cited as if it were an unconditional "commitment" on the part of the United States "to resist Communist aggression" from then to the present and seemingly for all time. It should also be noted that the letter put the burden of resistance on the government of Vietnam, not on the United States. Mr. Eisenhower's caution, which was most notable in his own administration, seems to desert him whenever he gives advice to other administrations. On April 20, 1964, President Johnson said that "our commitment today is just the same as the commitment made by President Eisenhower in 1954." If so, it is still nothing more than an offer of aid conditional on "the standards of performance" of, and "needed reforms" by, the government of South Vietnam.

† Bernard B. Fall, *Viet-Nam Witness*, Praeger, p. 124.

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intend to honor the Geneva Agreements, especially the one providing for general elections. By July 1955, he initiated a "Campaign for Denunciation of Communist Subversion." In effect, Diem beat the Communists to the punch; he caught them off balance and forced them on the defensive. Opinions differ as to whether he provoked them first or vice versa, but all agree that he hurt them at first far more than they could hurt him.

Even the State Department's White Paper of February 1965, a highly tendentious document, tends to confirm this view. After the Geneva Agreements of 1954, it relates, the Communists adopted a strategy of "all means short of open violence" to weaken Diem's regime. Diem's anti-Communist campaign in the South was so successful that "morale in the Communist organization in the South dropped sharply" and "defections were numerous." For this reason, the Communist cadres in the South had to be "rebuilt, reorganized and expanded" *after 1956*. The appreciable increase of Communist terror in the South is dated from 1958.*

The Communist version agrees that Diem had the Communists at bay in 1955-59. The Australian Communist journalist, Wilfred G. Burchett, was told that the Communist line in the South until the end of 1959 was exclusively for "a legal, political, non-violent form of struggle." It allegedly changed at that time to permit "the use of arms in self-defense only" because the Communists were "faced with the wholesale wiping out of all former resistance cadres." The local Communists interpreted "self-defense" rather freely as an authorization to launch small-scale attacks for the purpose of seizing arms, and the first such attack was carried out by about 260 men with only 170 weapons early in 1960.† This version neglects to mention the epidemic of Communist terrorism before 1959 which cost several hundred lives. But isolated terrorist attacks were symptoms of Communist desperation rather than of any massive threat. An apparently well-informed pro-Communist source gives the autumn of 1957 as the beginning of the campaign of terrorism, mainly against village chiefs, and 1960 for the first "really military assaults."**

But Diem was too successful for his own good. If he had cracked down only on the Communists, he would not have had to worry too much. The Communists, however, made up only a small part of those caught in Diem's dragnet. By 1956, Diem was well on his way to creating a police state which silenced, exiled, imprisoned or put to death all rivals and critics indiscriminately. His repression atomized and pulverized the Vietnamese society which he had just succeeded in giving some semblance of unity. The Communists picked up allies as quickly as he made enemies. An able and sensitive observer, Robert Shaplen, says that the popularity of Diem's regime "began to wane seriously" as early as 1957.†† By November 1960, a sizable segment of his own army made a first, almost successful attempt to overthrow him. Since the Communists also went over to organized guerrilla warfare in 1960, Diem's regime was beset on all sides at once. At this time, however, the Communists were still far from being his main concern. The guerrillas' strength, according to Bernard B. Fall, that indefatigable student who refuses to be hoodwinked by either side, was estimated in 1959 at only three thousand. And even if we accept the figures in the State Department's White Paper of February 1965, only 1,800 to 2,700 men were infiltrated from the North in 1959-60. Burchett's account makes clear that the Communists had hardly succeeded in getting their military actions started in 1960.

AND YET, no sooner had John F. Kennedy been sworn into office than the highest Washington officials were spreading the word among themselves that Diem's regime was on the point of collapse. Kennedy's first appointment as ambassador to South Vietnam, Frederick E. Nolting, Jr., was sent off to Saigon in April 1961 with this news ringing in his ears. According to John Mecklin, the American Public Affairs Officer in Saigon in 1962-64, Nolting was told in Washington before he left for his post that "it would be a miracle if South Vietnam lasted three months longer."*** Secretary of Defense McNamara gave a more restrained version in March 1964 of the situation which had forced President Kennedy's hand three years earlier: "When President Diem appealed to President Kennedy at the end of 1961, the South Vietnamese were quite plainly losing their fight against the Communists, and we promptly agreed to increase our assistance.†††

That Diem, who had had the Communists on the run from at least 1955 to almost the end of the decade, should have faced defeat at their hands by early 1961 is inexplicable in terms of

* Only Professor Frank N. Trager seems to insist that the Communists constituted a "genuine threat to security" in South Vietnam in 1955-56 (*Why Viet Nam?*, Praeger, pp. 119-21). In those years, and for two or three more years, however, pro-Diem supporters used to deride the seriousness of the Communist threat and boast of South Vietnam's peacefulness and stability. Even George A. Carver, Jr., later revealed as a CIA official, states that the "incipient insurgency" did not become a "serious threat" until the end of 1958 and that the Vietcong was still unable "to win a really significant political following" by the following year (*Foreign Affairs*, April 1966, p. 359).

† Wilfred G. Burchett, *Vietnam: Inside Story of the Guerrilla War*, International Publishers, pp. 112-15.

** "Les Américains au Vietnam" in *Les Temps Modernes* (Paris), January 1966. This article was published in German in *Das Argument* (Berlin), February 1966, where it was signed by Georg W. Alsheimer. An English translation appeared in *Alternatives* (La Jolla, California), Fall 1966.

†† Robert Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution*, Harper, rev. ed. 1966, p. 141. This estimate is supported by Carver who states that Diem "reached his political highwater mark some time around mid-1957" (*op. cit.*, p. 358).

*** John Mecklin, *Mission in Torment*, Doubleday, p. 17.

††† Speech of March 26, 1964.

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the Communists' own strength. It is understandable only in terms of the inner degeneration of Diem's regime and its suicidal estrangement from other non-Communist forces in South Vietnam. The fatal disease was political, not military.

VI

THE PROBLEM before Kennedy in 1961 was, in essence, the problem that had faced Eisenhower in 1954. What should the United States do to stave off a complete collapse in Vietnam? The most detailed and candid account of Kennedy's decision appears in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.'s chronicle, *A Thousand Days*. It is a veritable case history of how the military submerged the political in action, if not always in intention and thinking.

Kennedy came to the Vietnam problem, as he did to other problems, without a consistent position behind him. Professor Schlesinger cites the speech which Kennedy made in the Senate in April 1954 against U.S. military assistance to the French or unilateral intervention to bolster a regime which the "great masses" of Vietnamese did not support. Theodore C. Sorensen even cites the same passage as the "key" to the late President's decision in 1961. But an ardent interventionist, Professor Frank N. Trager, has dug up another Kennedy speech from June 1956 that might have been made by another man. By this time, Diem seemed to have consolidated his rule, and Senator Kennedy hailed it as our "offspring" which we could not afford to permit to fail. Schlesinger and Sorensen do not mention the second speech, and Trager does not mention the first one. The difference in emphasis may be defended on the ground that the situation in South Vietnam had changed markedly in two years, but even so, the conclusion is inescapable that Kennedy was too pessimistic in 1954 and too optimistic in 1956. The ease with which Kennedy can be quoted against Kennedy suggests the dangers and difficulties of evaluating a statesman whose style is considered more important than his substance.

In his first months in office, Kennedy had to make up his mind whether Diem had failed and, if so, what to do about it. As Schlesinger tells the story, his advisers lined up in two camps, the "political" and the "military." Those who put a political effort in Vietnam as the first consideration saw no hope short of a "change of leadership" in Saigon, which meant dropping Diem in favor of some other South Vietnamese leader. Among those explicitly urging this course were John Kenneth Galbraith, then ambassador to India, and implicitly W. Averell Harriman, appointed Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East in 1961, and the writer Theodore H. White. Schlesinger refers to a "Harriman group" in the State Department which questioned subordinating the political to the military. Vice President Johnson went to Saigon in May 1961 and advised in favor of more Vietnamese troop-training by American forces but against the commitment of American troops in combat. He seems to have occupied a middle ground, defined by Schlesinger as "the reorientation of the military effort along with programs of political and economic reform."

But the main weight of the pressure on Kennedy inside the government fell over on the military side. A special mission to South Vietnam headed by General Maxwell D. Taylor and Walt W. Rostow of the State Department recommended sending a relatively small American military task force with combat capabilities. Except for the so-called Harriman group, the State Department in the person of Secretary Dean Rusk "was well satisfied with military predominance in the formation of United States policy toward Vietnam." General Taylor has revealed that both the introduction of American ground forces and American bombing of Northern military targets were under consideration at least since November 1961, when he presented his report. Sorensen goes so far as to say that "all" of Kennedy's principal advisers on Vietnam favored the commitment of American combat troops.*

Finally, Kennedy did more or less at the end of 1961 what Eisenhower had done at the end of 1954. He decided, as General Taylor later put it at the Vietnam hearings, to change the number but not the "quality" of our military advisers. He ruled out combat missions but gradually increased the number of "advisers" from about eight hundred to about seventeen thousand. Schlesinger quotes Kennedy in one of his most appealing, astute, and antic moods, turning down the advice of those who wanted an American combat commitment: "It's like taking a drink. The effect wears off, and you have to take another." And, Kennedy also confided to Schlesinger, the war in Vietnam could only be won if it was *their* war, not *ours*.

Yet Schlesinger admits that Kennedy's decision at the end of 1961 "was to place the main emphasis on the military effort." This emphasis required renewed and intensified political support of the Diem regime. The new American ambassador, Frederick E. Nolting, Jr., and the new American military commander in Saigon, General Paul Harkins, made Diem's cause their own. Nolting established a relationship with Ngo Dinh Diem similar to that of Ambassador Arthur Gardner with Fulgencio Batista in Cuba in 1953-57 or of Ambassador W. Tapley Bennett, Jr., with Donald Reid Cabral in the Dominican Republic in 1964 and part of 1965. Thus there was an unmistakable political side to the military decision.

* Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days*, Houghton Mifflin, pp. 544-47 and 986. Testimony of General Maxwell D. Taylor, *The Vietnam Hearings op. cit.*, p. 171. Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy*, Harper & Row, p. 653.

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For some reason, Kennedy's military decision, which was halfhearted, has come in for far more attention than its political counterpart, which was not. Ambassador Nolting represented a do-or-die, wholehearted political gamble on the durability and reformability of Diem's regime.

Why did Kennedy do it? Why did Kennedy, as John Mecklin put it, act the way Eisenhower had acted, only "more so"?* The answer given by former President Kennedy's intimates and biographers is most revealing. Both Schlesinger and Sorensen plead in his defense that past American policy had virtually given Kennedy no other alternative. Kennedy, writes Schlesinger, "had no choice now but to work within the situation he had inherited," and Dulles's policy in South Vietnam had "left us in 1961 no alternative but to continue the effort of 1954." Sorensen strikes the same note.† In exculpation, they emphasize that Kennedy's military contribution was still limited. But the principle they accept would make it difficult for a President to refuse to go from a low-level to a high-level limit and, if necessary, to an unlimited effort. Moreover, they neglect to pay enough attention to the fact that, while his military investment in the Diem regime was then limited, he threw in a practically unlimited political bonus in the persons of Ambassador Nolting and General Harkins, and the latter may have been by far the more important of the two.

It is, of course, a truism that no policy is made *in vacuo* and that the past weighs heavily on every important Presidential decision. But if Professor Schlesinger is right that President Kennedy's options were so limited, even in 1961, when we had only about eight hundred non-combat military personnel on the scene, the implications are truly frightening. One gets the impression from these memoirs and memorials of Kennedy's associates that they are writing of a man who did what he did not want to do, what he knew or felt he should not do, and what he had little faith would come out right in the end. There is nothing so devastating about our entire Vietnam policy as the sense of fatality, and this is the best argument that Kennedy's friends have been able to muster in his behalf. I rather think that the former President would not have given himself such an easy way out, any more than he did in the Bay of Pigs case.** Inasmuch as some of his former aides experienced a partial change of heart in 1966, it is hard to see how, if the former President's options were so limited in 1961 without American combat troops in South Vietnam, they can think the present President can have any options with about 400,000 combat troops there.

VII

THE THIRD turning-point, in November 1963, came about primarily because John F. Kennedy lost his political gamble on Ngo Dinh Diem.

Diem's regime benefited at first from the increased American military and political support. The military approach seemed to be paying off. Our policy in 1962, writes Professor Schlesinger, was "dominated by those who saw Vietnam as primarily a military problem and who believed that its solution required unconditional support of Diem." When Diem's durability proved to be an illusion, there was nothing to fall back on. Diem's power was based on the demoralization of South Vietnamese political life, and he succeeded so well that we are still living with the political wasteland that he left, not without our cooperation.

What supporting Ngo Dinh Diem unconditionally after 1961 meant has been most intimately described by John Mecklin, whose official duties brought him into contact with the highest officials on both sides. He and other observers agree that we were not even supporting a government; we were supporting a slightly pixilated family's fief. The awesome or awful threesome of this family—Ngo Dinh Diem, his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, and the latter's wife, Mme. Ngo Dinh Nhu—are most often described in psychiatric terms. Mecklin's bizarre account of their habitual behavior belongs in a textbook of mental pathology. He gently diagnoses the three of them as victims of "blank-wall irrationality." Mecklin relates whimsically that he once had a dream "about an American diplomatic mission that gradually discovered it had been dealing for years with a government of madmen." But when he awoke, he asked himself whether he had been dreaming after all. Shaplen refers to the condition of Nhu, generally considered the power behind the throne, as "seemingly paranoid." Even Professor Trager, always inclined to give the Diem regime the benefit of a doubt, finds it necessary to acknowledge that Ngo Dinh Nhu was "at the end, perhaps crazed."††

The fall of Diem was not the work of the Communists. It was not the result of an imminent military collapse. Secretary McNamara went to South Vietnam in late September 1963 and on his return reported that the military situation was so favorable a thousand American troops could be withdrawn by the end of the year and "the major part of the United States military task can be completed by the end of 1965." General Harkins was quoted on November 1 as saying that "victory" was just "months away" and the reduction of American "advisers" could begin at any time. On that same day, Diem's own generals carried out

* Mecklin, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

† Schlesinger, *op. cit.*, p. 538; Sorensen, *op. cit.*, p. 651.

** I am inclined to believe that the historical verdict on the Kennedy administration will be much closer to the more skeptical view of Henry Pachter's essay, "JFK as an Equestrian Statue: On Myth and Mythmakers," in *Salmagundi*, Spring 1966, pp. 3-26.

†† Mecklin, *op. cit.*, pp. 48 and 204-5; Shaplen, *op. cit.*, p. 189; Trager, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

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the coup which resulted in his and his brother's assassination. Whether the United States directly connived in the coup is a matter of dispute; but that the United States prepared the way for the coup, knew of it in advance, and did nothing to discourage it, is not.*

In any event, Ngo Dinh Diem fell the way Fulgencio Batista had fallen and Donald Reid Cabral would fall. No one cared; no one moved; no one grieved—except possibly those American officials who had staked their reputations and careers on him. When he heard of the deaths of Diem and Nhu, Schlesinger tells us, President Kennedy no doubt "realized that Vietnam was his great failure in foreign policy." Mecklin remarks that the Diem-Nhu raids on the Buddhist pagodas in August 1963, which precipitated the coup, "were an act of political bankruptcy, confession of a catastrophic failure of leadership."†

It does not really matter what one thinks of the Diem regime, whether it was worth overthrowing or preserving. If Diem deserved his fate, American policy in South Vietnam for at least eight years under two Presidents could not have been more misbegotten and misdirected. If the United States should have opposed the anti-Diem coup, the implicit encouragement given to the plotters was no less wrongheaded. Either way, Diem's downfall represented the political bankruptcy and catastrophic failure not only of his own policy but that of the United States. Kennedy's decision in 1963 not to block Diem's overthrow was the most deadly criticism of Kennedy's decision in 1961 to back Diem to the hilt. The most persuasive argument against Diem's downfall has been that there was nothing better to put in his place. If this is true, it merely indicates how well Diem and his family had done their work of political devastation. In the last few months of Diem's regime, it was hard to tell whether he was more anti-American than the Americans were anti-Diem. The ghastly tragedy was not without the overtones of a macabre farce.

No one could blame the Communists for this contretemps. Even Secretary McNamara explained Diem's collapse in political terms: "But this progress [in 1962] was interrupted in 1963 by the political crises arising from troubles between the government and the Buddhists, students, and other *non-Communist* oppositionists. President Diem lost the confidence and loyalty of his people; there were accusations of maladministration and injustice" (my italics, T.D.).**

In the last stage of the Diem regime, the threat of Communist despotism mattered far less than the reality of Diem's despotism. The most scathing indictment of the political failure was probably pronounced by the responsible and experienced Australian correspondent, Denis Warner, who wrote that "the tyranny the West allied with in Saigon was in many ways worse than the tyranny it was fighting against."††

The eight lost years of Ngo Dinh Diem were, then, the Vietnamese equivalent of Batista's seven years in Cuba and Reid Cabral's sixteen months in the Dominican Republic.

VIII

THE FOURTH turning-point, in February 1965, brings us to the transition from the primarily political to the primarily military phase of this war.

Once more, a deceptive temporary political improvement seemed to take place after the November 1963 coup. First a government dominated by General Duong Van Minh, better known as "Big Minh," came in, and then, in January 1964, it was overthrown by a military junta headed by General Nguyen Khanh. By this time, the agony of making the final American decisions had been handed on to Lyndon B. Johnson.

The leading American officials had especially "high hopes" in General Khanh, as Secretary McNamara in one of his most illuminating and ill-fated speeches in March of that year expressed it. General Khanh, said Secretary McNamara, was just the man to defeat the Communists. Mc-

* Of the many versions, the following may be mentioned. At one extreme is Arthur Schlesinger's assurance: "It is important to state clearly that the coup of November 1, 1963, was entirely planned and carried out by the Vietnamese. Neither the American Embassy nor the CIA were involved in instigation or execution" (*op. cit.*, p. 997). Schlesinger is probably right about the "execution" but "instigation" is a broad word which, in this case, may cover too much ground. The other extreme view is represented by former Ambassador Frederick E. Nolting, Jr., who has publicly charged, in a letter to the New York *Times* of October 29, 1966, that the anti-Diem generals were "encouraged by the United States Government." Shaplen, who learned a great deal about the inside story of the coup, says that the coup was executed with the "full knowledge" and "consent" of the Americans (*op. cit.*, p. 211). Mecklin reviews the available evidence and clearly believes that U.S. policy from early October 1963 encouraged and even "led to" the coup. He sums up bitingly: "But to assert that the U.S. was 'not involved' in the coup was a bit like claiming innocence for a night watchman at a bank who tells a known safecracker that he is going out for a beer" (*op. cit.*, p. 278). Sorensen states that President Kennedy sent a cable in late August 1963 "indicating that the United States would not block any spontaneous military revolt against Diem" but he denies that the plotters received any "assistance" from the United States, as if the hands-off attitude were not assistance enough (*op. cit.*, p. 659). The upshot seems to be that Shaplen is right in his judgment that the coup "succeeded in the end primarily because it was a genuine homegrown plot that expressed real grievances against a regime that had become totally corrupt and oppressive." But the homegrown plotters needed, if not encouragement, then at least a lack of discouragement from the United States. In the circumstances, the latter was almost as positive as the former.

† Schlesinger, *op. cit.*, p. 997; Mecklin, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

** March 26, 1964. The same admission is made in the State Department's White Paper of February 1965: "The military and insurgency situation was complicated by a *quite separate internal political struggle* in South Vietnam, which led in November, 1963, to the removal of the Diem government and its replacement with a new one" (my italics, T.D.).

†† Denis Warner, *The Last Confucian*, Penguin Books, p. 236.

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Namara credited Khanh with a demonstrated grasp of the basic political, economic, and psychological elements to assure victory.

In 1964, therefore, the American line was still basically political or politico-economic. In that same March speech, Secretary McNamara held that North Vietnamese support was a "critical factor" in the strength of the Southern Vietcong. But, he went on, "the large indigenous support that the Vietcong receives means that solutions must be as political and economic as military. Indeed, there can be no such thing as a purely 'military' solution to the war in South Vietnam."

Five months later, in August, the State and Defense Departments issued a pamphlet which discounted the use of American combat units in a guerrilla war of the Vietnamese type "in which knowledge of terrain, language, and local customs is especially important." The pamphlet also warned that American combat units would provide "ammunition for Communist propaganda which falsely proclaims that the United States is conducting a 'white man's war' against Asians."*

At this late date, then, American policy was still ostensibly anchored to the Eisenhower-Kennedy principle of limited commitment and limited liability. All the right things were said on the eve of doing just the opposite.

What caused this abrupt and seemingly unanticipated change of policy at the beginning of 1965 in favor of sending massive American combat units to wage an increasingly "white man's war"?

THE OFFICIAL American explanation, given in the State Department's White Paper of February 1965 and in Secretary Rusk's testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in February 1966, is that the change in American policy was caused by the movement into the South of the North Vietnamese 325th Division at the end of 1964. The White Paper charged that at least 4,400 and possibly as many as 7,400 came in from the North in the entire year of 1964. It did not explain how, of this rather modest total, more than a small fraction could have been identified with this division in the first weeks of 1965.

In any event, the military escalation of the North was made the basic rationale for the American military escalation, which took the form of a decision in February 1965 to bomb North Vietnamese military targets and, at about the same time, another decision to commit American combat troops on a larger scale.†

This rationale has not been, even on factual grounds, very persuasive. For one thing, the Northern 325th was a "vanishing" division which was not visible for months after it was supposed to have moved into the South in such force that it had precipitated a historic change in American policy. A special subcommittee of the House Committee on Armed Services headed by Representative Otis G. Pike (Dem., N.Y.), visited South Vietnam in June 1965, long after the 325th had allegedly transformed the character of the war. Its report did not even mention North Vietnamese units or military action in the south; it was written wholly in terms of what was still referred to as a "guerrilla war." Bernard B. Fall happened to visit South Vietnam in late 1965. "As of the time I left a few days ago," he wrote in an article published in October, "no Intelligence officer was ready to swear that the 325th as a unit had joined the battle in South Vietnam." A bipartisan group of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, headed by Senator Mike Mansfield, visited South Vietnam at the end of 1965. It reported that North Vietnamese regular soldiers made up only 14,000 of the estimated 230,000 enemy force in December 1965, a year after the celebrated incursion of the Northern 325th Division. This report accepted the official version that North Vietnam regular army troops had begun to enter the South about the end of 1964, but it did not mention this division at all and, in any case, the numbers cited put the whole matter in a different perspective. On June 16, 1966, Senator Mansfield made an even more astounding revelation. "When the sharp increase in the American military effort began in early 1965," he declared, "it was estimated that only about 400 North Vietnamese soldiers were among the enemy forces in the South which totaled 140,000 at that time." A reporter for the Scripps-Howard newspapers went to the Defense Department and received confirmation of these figures.**

* *Viet Nam: The Struggle for Freedom*, Government Printing Office, 1964, p. 21.

† It does not yet seem possible to pinpoint the latter decision, although it was certainly made early in 1965. A feature article on General Westmoreland in *Newsweek*, December 5, 1966, p. 49, indicates it was made in February and carried out in March. The first American combat troops landed on March 6, 1965. The Mansfield report stated that the American military force of about 34,000 was still "basically an advisory organization" in May 1965. It then went on to say that the logistic system to support the vastly expanded U.S. effort started "almost from scratch in May of 1965." But the logistic effort may have followed the decision by some time. General Westmoreland has recently revealed: "Early in 1965 we knew that the enemy hoped to deliver the *coup de grâce* by launching a major summer offensive to cut the Republic of Vietnam in two with a drive across the central highlands to the sea. I had to make a decision, and did. I chose a rapid build-up of combat forces, in the full knowledge that we should not have a fully developed logistic base to support those forces" (*U.S. News & World Report*, November 28, 1966, p. 49). We thus know the approximate time of the decision but the general does not mention the exact month. Ambassador Lodge recently dated the turning-point as July 28, 1965, when the President formally announced the decision to commit U.S. troops on a large scale (*ibid.*, November 21, 1966, p. 67). But this is the announcement, not the decision.

** Report of Special Subcommittee to South Vietnam of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, June 10-21, 1965, especially p. 3,248; Bernard B. Fall, the *New Republic*, October 9, 1965, p. 17; "The Vietnam Conflict: The Substance and the Shadow," Report of Senators

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It would have been a sorry moment in American history if so few North Vietnamese troops could have panicked Washington into making such a far-reaching change of course. The truth was bad enough, but not that bad. The Mansfield report came much closer by putting the emphasis where it belonged—South Vietnamese weakness rather than North Vietnamese strength. "In short," the report stated grimly, "a total collapse of the Saigon government's authority appeared imminent in the early months of 1965." And it linked the need for large-scale American combat forces to this threatened collapse, which it did not attribute to the infiltration of a few hundred North Vietnamese regulars. More recently, Secretary McNamara has revealed how menacing the outlook was in the first half of 1965. The United States, he said, put over 100,000 men into the South in about 120 days to prevent a "disaster" to the South Vietnamese armed forces. The latter, according to him, were being overpowered and destroyed by the Vietcong and Northern army infiltrators in the summer of 1965. The U.S. intervened in force, he declared, because the enemy had been "approaching possible victory."*

From the more disingenuous State Department version, it would appear that the 325th North Vietnamese Division began to appear in the South in "November, December [1964], January [1965]," as Secretary Rusk put it at the Senate Committee hearings, and this single factor caused the United States to change its tactics and policy the following month. If we recall that, according to Senator Mansfield, the North Vietnamese soldiers in the South numbered only about four hundred at the beginning of 1965, this rationalization obviously belongs in the theater of the absurd. Unfortunately, Senator Mansfield's figure was not widely reported in the press, and he delicately refrained from suggesting that there might be any incongruity between this figure and the State Department's thesis.† A reader of the State Department's post-1964 literature on Vietnam hardly knows whether to be amused or insulted.

The crisis in 1965 in South Vietnam was far more intimately related to South Vietnamese disintegration than to North Vietnamese infiltration. General Khanh, whom Secretary McNamara had praised so highly in March 1964, turned out to be another illusion. At the Senate Committee hearings, General Taylor, the American Ambassador in Saigon from June 1964 to July 1965, the very period leading to the vast American buildup, was asked whether the present regime of Air Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky was more stable than its predecessors had been. Taylor replied: "Almost anything would be an improvement over what I saw while I was Ambassador." John Mecklin explained the South Vietnamese "malaise" of 1965 in these terms: "The nation was desperately weary of war, its people verging on such despair that they would soon accept anything to get it over with." Bernard B. Fall attributed the trouble to the fact that Diem's successors evolved a policy which he called "Diemism without Diem." Premier Nguyen Cao Ky recently described his predecessors in these terms: "Every Prime Minister or even Minister said: 'I'm here for two months, so money, money, and if necessary I'll go abroad.' "**

In effect, the South Vietnamese crisis of 1965 was essentially a reprise of the 1963 crisis, not a totally new phenomenon as argued by the State Department. The qualitative change came *after* the American decision to bomb North Vietnam and pour troops into South Vietnam. In 1966, the American force numbered 205,000 in February, 300,000 in September, and was rising to 400,000 by the end of the year. In June 1966, according to Senator Mansfield, there were in the neighborhood of 30,000 North Vietnamese regulars out of a total enemy force of 250,000.†† As in the case of the Dominican Republic, where the State Department tried to play the numbers game with its lists of Dominican Communists, the numbers game of North Vietnamese army regulars has also backfired, thanks mainly to the integrity of a courageous Senator.

IX

For our purposes, however, it is less important to determine whether North Vietnam provoked the United States to intervene in force than to find out what the enlarged American military role in 1965 signified in terms of the problem we are examining—the supersession of political by military instrumentalities in the conduct of American foreign policy.

The alleged North Vietnamese army incursion at the end of 1964 provided the President and the State Department with a rationalization for proclaiming a fundamental change in the character of the war. Until 1965, the official American line still considered it a predominantly "civil war." In that year, according to the policymakers in Washington, it became a "foreign aggression." The "foreigners" in this case were the North Vietnamese who were apparently invading a "foreign" country, South Vietnam.

As long as American policy regarded the struggle as primarily a "civil war," the American line

Mansfield, Muskie, Inouye, Aiken, and Rep. Boggs, *Congressional Record*, House, January 13, 1966, p. 141; Mansfield, address at Yeshiva University, June 16, 1966; Ted Knap, Washington *Daily News*, June 23, 1966.

* November 5, 1966.

† Both the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post* of June 17, 1966, reported the speech but omitted mention of this passage. A letter in the New York *Times* of November 15, 1966, however, quoted the relevant sentence. The entire speech may be found in the *Congressional Record*, Senate, June 16, 1966, pp. 12,856-58.

** Taylor, *The Vietnam Hearings*, p. 183; Mecklin, *op. cit.*, p. 290; Fall, the New York *Times* Magazine, December 12, 1965, p. 48; New York *Times*, Dec. 3, 1966.

†† Speech of June 16, 1966.

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emphasized that the political instrumentality was at least as important as the military and that, as Secretary McNamara put it in March 1964, "there can be no such thing as a purely 'military' solution to the war in South Vietnam." But, as a corollary of the theory of "foreign aggression," the priorities assigned to the political and military instrumentalities were reversed. Suddenly, almost overnight, American policy shifted into its military phase, and all the blame was heaped on a few hundred or at most a few thousand North Vietnamese army regulars. American and South Vietnamese officials continued to pay lip service to political and social reforms but they came to be regarded as the indefinitely postponed by-product rather than the indispensable precondition of military "victory."

By coincidence, of course, all the political and social gimmicks which had been advertised to save South Vietnam from Communist seduction had exhausted themselves by 1965. The "strategic hamlet" program launched in March 1962 had died with Diem by November 1963. In the South, where 2 per cent of the landowners had owned 45 per cent of the land, "land reform" had given the peasants little land and less reform. "Counter-insurgency," "pacification," and all the other well-meaning slogans had bogged down in the South Vietnamese inability or unwillingness to give them meaningful implementation. The House Committee on Armed Services group, under Representative Pike, which made a survey on the spot in June 1965, observed that "rural reconstruction" had been "no great success." The Senate Foreign Relations group, under Senator Mansfield, which investigated the situation at the end of 1965, reported that the so-called pacification or civic-action program had been permitted in large measure to "lapse" after Diem's fall. To this day, "pacification" is considered second in importance only to the military effort but the former has lagged far behind and has admittedly failed to make any serious progress.

Just as the decay and downfall of Ngo Dinh Diem's regime in 1963 caused a crisis of conscience on the part of American correspondents in Saigon, so the political and social failure after 1965 has resulted in some equally troubled soul-searching. Three of the most thoughtful attempts to probe beneath the surface of events provide the necessary background for understanding the new war strategy that came out of the Manila Conference last October.

In *Newsweek* of September 12, 1966, Everett G. Martin, the bureau chief in Saigon, tried to get at the "crucial error" in our Vietnam policy. The chief problem, as he saw it, was nothing less than the failure, at this late date, to make the Vietnamese people feel that it was *their* war. This is how he expressed it: "And it is indeed true that although the U.S. has put heavy emphasis on the need to win the support of peasants living in areas contested by the Vietcong, we have yet to convince even those Vietnamese dwelling in the most secure areas of the country that there is a cause worth fighting for." In the same unrelenting fashion, he added that the Vietnamese in the South "seem to be able to maintain an almost total impassivity," that "most Vietnamese appear to be so many stoic islands, as immune to the war as they are to the monsoon rains," that the American soldier on leave in major Vietnamese cities carries away the overriding impression "of a people abnormally detached from the brutal reality he knows in the battlefield." He noted that Vietnamese soldiers had no incentive to fight aggressively as a result of the "callous unconcern" for their welfare, but that perhaps even more disturbing was "the fact that the greatest indifference to the war effort is found among Vietnam's young people." Relations between the Americans and the South Vietnamese had "degenerated into a kind of ill-defined antagonism," reminiscent of the late Diem period. One American official commented on the growing American cynicism: "You don't find any idealists around any more. They have either given up and gone home, or they are just serving out their time."

For Martin, the "root of the problem" appeared to be largely political. He was chiefly impressed by the fact that "while Americans have democratic institutions to defend, the Vietnamese have none." The remedy, he thought, was the encouragement of democracy on a local scale, in the provinces, where the Vietnamese people could learn what it means to make their wishes known through a local council and see them respected by Saigon-appointed officials. Vietnam had once had a local election system which had made the village, in Bernard B. Fall's words, "the real cradle of a Jeffersonian type of representative government in the country."* Not even the French had tampered with this traditional village democracy. But, in June 1956, Ngo Dinh Diem had arbitrarily abolished this entire system in favor of personal appointees who soon became the targets of Communist terrorists. "Diemism without Diem" had changed nothing in this respect. "We Americans," Martin lamented, "have wasted all the years since the revolution against Diem by not fostering local democracy in areas that were secure. Instead, we have allowed the Vietnamese corps commanders and their subordinates to become further entrenched as local war lords."

A more social analysis of the problem was made by Neil Sheehan in the New York *Times* Magazine of October 9, 1966. Sheehan had served two tours of duty in South Vietnam since 1962, first for the United Press International and more recently for the New York *Times*. He agreed with Martin that Americans came to work in South Vietnam with enthusiasm and good intentions but

* *Foreign Affairs*, October 1966, p. 6.

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extended experience made them leave the country victims of "the cynicism that pervades Vietnamese life." No exception to this rule, he sought to account for the monotonous miscarriage of desperately-need reforms, such as rent reduction and land distribution, urged by the Americans. This is what he found:

> All of these measures have been sabotaged because the regimes were and are composed of men who are members of, or who are allied with, mandarin families that held title to properties they have no intention of renouncing. While there are some patriotic and decent individuals among them, most of the men who rule Saigon have, like the Bourbons, learned nothing and forgotten nothing. They seek to retain what privileges they have and to regain those they have lost.

It is not easy for Americans to read, and it could not have been easy for an American to write—in 1966:

> In Vietnam, only the Communists represent revolution and social change, for better or worse according to a man's politics. The Communist party is the one truly national organization that permeates both North and South Vietnam. The men who lead the party today, Ho Chi Minh and the other members of the Politburo in Hanoi, directed the struggle for independence from France and in the process captured much of the deeply felt nationalism of the Vietnamese people. Perhaps because of this, the Communists, despite their brutality and deceit, remain the only Vietnamese capable of rallying millions of their countrymen to sacrifice and hardship in the name of the nation and the only group not dependent on foreign bayonets for survival.

Still, even Mr. Sheehan could see no way other than to continue to prosecute the war. But he did not conceal his deepest misgivings:

> We shall, I am afraid, have to put up with our Vietnamese mandarin allies. We shall not be able to reform them and it is unlikely that we shall be able to find any other Vietnamese willing to cooperate with us. . . .
>
> But I simply cannot help worrying that, in the process of waging this war, we are corrupting ourselves. I wonder . . . whether the United States or any nation has the right to inflict this suffering and degradation on another people for its own ends.

Not a few American journalists have lived up to the highest ideals of their calling in the Cuban, Dominican, and Vietnam crises. But the unflinching honesty and moral passion of Sheehan's article almost puts it in a class by itself. Lest the reader think that I have chosen unduly critical or "liberal" views of the war, I invite his attention to a later and equally candid report in an unimpeachably conservative publication. According to Marvin L. Stone in the *U.S. News & World Report* of December 5, 1966, the political situation in South Vietnam at the end of 1966 was worse than ever:

> The political fabric of the country is still shedding. Social progress is held in tight rein. After all these years, the war against the guerrillas in the countryside has not yet really begun.

Stone, who has visited South Vietnam many times since the French pulled out ten years ago, found that "there is less effective presence in the villages now than there was three years ago." Corruption is worse than it was under the late Ngo Dinh Diem. Domestic output has been going down steadily. The guerrillas' success in the past year "has been almost astonishing." The peasants are suffering more than before at the hands of both Communist extortionists and extortionate landowners. Of the "mandarin families" in South Vietnam, Stone writes:

> Not only is government security lacking, but Saigon's land-reform program, so vital to the aspirations of peasants, has never really been put in motion. In the secure areas, tenant farmers—that means 70 per cent of all farmers in the Delta—still are forced to pay up to 50 per cent and more of their rice crops to absentee landlords who have no obligation in return. A law on the books since 1955 sets the limit at 25 per cent.
>
> Americans here insist that no progress will be made so long as the men at the top in Saigon are members of mandarin families, or allied with families which have vested interests in land that they have no intention of relinquishing.

These commentaries on the latest phase of the war tell us more about the meaning of the Manila Conference of October 1966 than anything that came out of the conference itself. This conference will probably symbolize the fifth turning-point of American policy in the war, though the major decisions were made in Washington just before or just afterward. When all the oratory, propaganda, and pharisaism are forgotten, only the hard, stark military decisions that coincided with the meeting will be remembered. A month after the conference, it was made known that the number of American troops in South Vietnam would be increased by at least another 100,000 in 1967 for a total of nearly 500,000. Of even greater significance, however, is the new "strategy" which this enlarged force is supposed to carry out. In brief, the Americans are going to take over the "aggressive" or "offensive" military operations, and the South Vietnamese troops will be used mainly for rear-guard protective and "pacification" purposes. As far as most of the fighting is concerned, then, just what the State and Defense Department pamphlet warned against only two years ago is now contemplated—the United States is preparing

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to conduct "a 'white man's war' against Asians."*

Some notion of how top American officials assess the present and future was vouchsafed by "our mandarin," Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge.† As of November 1966, he said, we were faced with three different kinds of enemy forces: the North Vietnamese army regulars ("approximately 50,000," according to the U.S. Commander, General William C. Westmoreland), the Southern-recruited but sometimes Northern-led Vietcong military units (generally estimated at about 100,000), and highly-trained "guerrilla terrorist" groups working in the villages (put at "over 150,000" by Mr. Lodge). After finding some comfort in such blessings as the absence of an actual famine in the South, Mr. Lodge went on to admit that five things had changed little or not at all—the mileage of roads open to all kinds of traffic, the percentage of population living under secure conditions, the percentage of population under Vietcong domination, the daily toll of Communist terrorism, and the rate of Vietcong military recruitment. In effect, the great American effort since 1965 has mainly succeeded in averting an utter collapse in South Vietnam; the new stage of the war is but the beginning of the end—if there is an end on this path.

Mr. Lodge's idea of the end is not very clear, but the end is surely not very near. After we have beaten the army of North Vietnam, of which only a small part has been committed to action, and the organized military units of the Vietcong, he tells us, then we will first be able to get at what he calls "the real cancer"—the civilian guerrillas, over 150,000 strong, in the villages. Only the destruction of the latter force, he says, would be regarded as "decisive" by the enemy. Once that is accomplished, he hazards, the end will probably take the form of a fadeaway. "When it comes to fading away," he declared, "I think there is a good chance that this is what the enemy will do when he makes up his mind that the jig is up."**

The American line has changed so often, however, that even Ambassador Lodge seems to lose track of it. After a terrorist attack in Saigon the following month, Mr. Lodge commented that the 150,000 terrorists could not be successfully dealt with "until we've rebuilt the whole political, social, and economic structure in this country"—no small order. The ambassador had apparently forgotten that the line had changed and that social change was now supposed to depend on "security," not vice versa. It may also come as something of a shock to their mandarins to learn that our mandarin thinks it is necessary to reconstruct their entire political, social, and economic system as a precondition for getting an effective "police function."††

Only time will tell whether this course will be any more successful in its own terms than previous plans, strategies, and predictions. But one thing is already certain—the next stage of the war is going to be infinitely more destructive both to South and North Vietnam. The main American military pressure is not going to come from the increased numbers of ground troops. General Westmoreland knows that enemy troops fear most of all "B-52s, tactical air, artillery, and armor, in that order."*** In the next phase of the war, they are going to get above all more B-52s, tactical air, artillery, and armor. General Earle G. Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called it "a dirty, little war" in 1963. Making it bigger will not make it any cleaner. U.N. Secretary-General U Thant called it one of the "most barbarous in history" last April. It is not, we may be sure, going to become any more civilized.

From the point of view which has been my chief concern, the new phase means more than anything else the total militarization of the war. The political and economic instrumentalities, once considered more important than the military, have been abandoned until the enemy has been forced to "fade away" by the application of overwhelming military power. This is the only interpretation that the drastic decision to remove the South Vietnamese troops from "major fighting" can have. It represents official recognition that the South Vietnamese common soldier cannot any longer be trusted to fight for "mandarin families," which, as Neil Sheehan put it, "seek to retain what privileges they have and to regain those they have lost." The deeper roots of this political and social "malaise" were touched on in the Martin, Sheehan, and Stone articles, and that is why they have such a close bearing on the most recent military decisions. The substitution of American for South Vietnamese troops corresponds to the substitution of the American for the Dominican military on April 28, 1965. This is the pattern which, in such different circumstances, has repeated itself clear across the globe.

X

ONE CAN ONLY shudder at what the new strategy is going to do to our "allies"—the people of South Vietnam. But the time has

* "South Vietnam's defense minister [Lt. Gen. Nguyen Huu Co] said Thursday [November 17, 1966] the entire Vietnamese army will switch to a pacification role in 1967 and leave major fighting to American troops" (UPI, Los Angeles *Times*, November 18, 1966). The state of the pacification program was described from Saigon by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak: "A crisis of utmost gravity lurks just behind the euphoric public relations propaganda about this vicious war that has recently been filling the air from Washington. Boiled down to its essence, the crisis is simply this: that instead of going forward, the absolutely vital program of pacification of the tens of thousands of hamlets in South Vietnam is going backward."

† In 1963, when Mr. Lodge was waging his war of nerves with Ngo Dinh Diem, the prize witticism in Saigon's American colony was: "Our mandarin will beat their mandarin."

** *U.S. News & World Report*, November 21, 1966, pp. 66-68.

†† New York *Times*, December 5, 1966.

*** *Ibid.*, November 28, 1966, p. 49.

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also come to worry about what this war has been doing to us.

One price we are paying takes the form of a peculiarly noxious virus which has entered our political bloodstream. It has been impossible for the Johnson administration to present all the twists and turns of its policy in a rational and consistent way. Yet, in a democracy such as ours, a President cannot disavow the intention of getting tied down in a land war in Asia or of sending American boys to do what Asian boys should be doing in 1964 and then proceed to take these very steps in 1965 and 1966 without making an intellectual effort to justify his actions. The intellects making this effort have produced a squirming mass of contradictions, evasions, half-truths, and worse. One can only hope, for our sake, that they do not believe their own political fantasies.

The escalation of force has required an escalation of theory. As long as our military intervention was limited, we could make do with aims and objectives that were also quite limited. But half a million men and billions of dollars a year cannot be justified on the basis of defending poor, little South Vietnam alone. The more we invest in it, we are assured, the more we will get out of it. By now, we are supposedly defending nothing less than all Southeast Asia and even India in the Vietnamese rice paddies and humble villages. A victory over the Vietnam Communists, we are told, is a victory over the Communists in half-a-dozen or more nearby countries who will not dare to challenge our power if we prove successful in Vietnam. This war is virtually being made into that favorite of American wars—the war to end all ("national-liberation") wars.

This is what I mean by escalation of theory. It has the apparent merit of bringing the cost and the return into somewhat better balance, of giving us more for our money and our men. But it has little more to commend it.

From one point of view, the Vietnamese Communists cannot any longer "lose" this war any more than we can "lose" it. For in this kind of war, the concept of "victory" is far more elusive than that of "defeat." In fact, neither word may be applicable to the peculiar Vietnam situation. The more realistic approach may be that each side is trying to prevent the other from winning too much and itself from losing too much. The war makes much more sense in negative than in positive terms. For the United States, it is important that the Communists should not win power in the South, and for the Communists it is important that their power should not be broken. Both sides are far more perspicacious and adamant about what they cannot surrender than about what they hope to achieve.

In this kind of tug-of-war, the price becomes all-important. The price the Vietnamese Communists have already extorted from the United States and vice versa is already a kind of "victory." The Vietnamese experience is going to make the United States think twice before getting into another such "quagmire," as David Halberstam has called it, and the Communists of similar countries will think twice before asking their forces to take such punishment in return for an immediate bid for power. But that is about all we can be sure of—that the price will be a deterrent on both sides next time.

The idea that the frustration of a Communist bid for power in South Vietnam will be some kind of decisive setback for Communism in Southeast Asia or even the world is, however, a political fairy tale. It fails to take into account that no Communist bid for power which forces the United States to pay such a high price for "victory," whatever that means, can be said to have been "defeated," whatever that also means in this instance. If the Communists of other impoverished, diminutive Southeast Asian countries could be sure of making us spend so much blood and treasure on frustrating them, we might well be faced with an epidemic of such wars. In this sense, the Vietnamese war, however it may end, has been more an encouragement than a discouragement to other wars of "national liberation."

We are also told that, since the Vietnamese war is part of a "Sino-Soviet world conspiracy," a "victory" in this war is a victory over that whole conspiracy. If this premise were true, the inordinate expenditure of men and money on a relatively tiny, marginal outpost of this conspiracy would be strategic lunacy. We can afford the luxury of engaging ourselves so heavily in Vietnam precisely because the Communist world is no longer monolithic and centrally-directed. If we need half a million or more men in Vietnam despite the Sino-Soviet conflict, one wonders how many we would need if Soviet Russia, Communist China, and their partisans were pulling together in Vietnam.

Fortunately, the Communists became disillusioned with their own "domino theory" about forty-five years ago. After October 1917, the Bolshevik leaders expected their revolution to set off a falling-dominoes effect in Western Europe. In the next six years or so, they found that national conditions in each country were far more important than their theory of world revolution had led them to expect. In order for a domino theory now to operate in Asia, it would be necessary to assume that the conditions in at least several countries resemble those in Vietnam of the past twenty years. It would be necessary to have a number of Communist parties which had inaugurated the equivalent of an armed struggle against French colonial rule as far back as 1945, had inflicted a total of 172,000 casualties on the French armed forces in the next nine years, had compelled a far larger French army to capitulate in July 1954, had again taken up arms in South Vietnam five or six years later, had driven the United States into

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intervening in force to stave off a South Vietnamese defeat in 1965, and into withdrawing the South Vietnamese forces from the front lines in 1966. None of this would have been possible if the Vietnamese Communists had not been able to identify themselves with the long-time aspirations of Vietnam nationalism and to convince a large part of the younger generation that they represented their interests better than anyone else. And it would also be necessary to posit that other Communist parties face the same kind of weak, corrupt, self-centered reactionary regimes the Vietnamese Communists have been fortunate enough to find against them.

As far as I know, no other Southeast Asian Communist party comes near to fulfilling these specifications. But if many more should happen to do so, the Vietnamese Communists have come so close to victory on so many occasions that their example will embolden the others, not deter them. In any case, I am willing to hazard the view that there is not enough money and manpower in the United States to prevent the South Asian dominoes from falling, whatever happens in Vietnam, if the Vietnamese conditions are so widespread. In the end, the political, social, and economic conditions in each country will determine the outcome far more than American political, economic, and military power.

It should also not escape notice that two can play at the "domino theory" just as two can play with the Munich analogy. If we cannot afford to give up Vietnam because the other anti-Communist dominoes in the region will fall, the Communists can tell themselves the same thing because the pro-Communist dominoes will fall. Recently, Jean-Paul Sartre's organ, *Les Temps Modernes,* created a stir in the Communist world by demanding that the entire "Socialist camp" should fix "exact limits whose violation will unleash direct reprisals" and should meet American escalation in Vietnam with "counter-escalation." It suggested that Soviet artillerymen could easily hit the air-naval bases and installations of the American Seventh Fleet located on Formosa, Okinawa, the Philippines, and the Gulf of Tonkin. And, among other "parallels" arguing for such action, it gave "the capitulations that preceded and followed the Munich Agreements."* These abstract theories and historical analogies are both dubious and double-edged; they will never bring us closer to any kind of peace in Vietnam.

IN THE American escalation of theory, it has become more and more popular to say that we are really fighting China in Vietnam. It is even held that there is no use asking old Ho Chi Minh to sit down at the table; the only one we could consider negotiating with is old Mao Tse-tung. But since the latter is now in the grip of some mania, we are told to wait until we can address ourselves to his successors.†

First, North Vietnam was substituted for the Southern-based Vietcong as the "real enemy." Now Communist China is being substituted for North Vietnam as the "real enemy." Or North Vietnam and Communist China are linked together as if the former were only an instrument or puppet of the latter. The trouble with this theory is that Soviet Russia and East Europe, not Communist China, are providing North Vietnam with most of the wherewithal to run its economy and arm its troops. At the Senate Committee's Vietnam hearings, Dean Rusk tried to get around this awkward circumstance by delivering himself of the view that the "instrument of aggression" is Hanoi but the "doctrine" of aggression "is from Peking."** Thus, it appears, Soviet Russia is not the real enemy in North Vietnam because it is merely providing most of the *matériel,* but Communist China is the true foe because it has made North Vietnam a gift of its "doctrine." And to think that the insatiable Chinese are not even grateful to us for giving them North Vietnam at bargain rates!

Yet Professor P. J. Honey, who has studied the subject more carefully than anyone else, warns us against such easy oversimplifications. He reminds us that two thousand years of Vietnamese-Chinese relations have left the Vietnamese with feelings toward the Chinese "not unlike those of the Irish for the English of Oliver Cromwell's day." Though the Vietnamese have learned to respect and fear the Chinese, they dislike them even more, which is why, Professor Honey explains, "Communist campaigns stressing the 'historical friendship' between the peoples of Vietnam and China had to be abandoned hurriedly when they encountered so much ridicule in North Vietnam." In the years 1954-56, the Vietnamese Communists slavishly followed the Chinese in their land reform and other policies, but this proved to be the worst mistake ever made by the North Vietnamese and led to disenchantment with the Chinese model. "The end of the North Vietnamese-Chinese honeymoon dates from 1957," Professor Honey writes, "and it is interesting to note that Ho Chi Minh made no attempt to imitate such Chinese policies as the 'Great Leap Forward' and the creation of communes."

Why Ho Chi Minh and his colleagues should be incapable of creating their own doctrine is hard to understand. Ho was a leading Communist before Mao, with far more international experience in the 1920's and 1930's. The Vietnamese Communists have over twenty years of their own armed struggle to draw lessons and legends from. They were largely dependent on the Chinese for aid in the anti-French phase, but have received much more from Soviet and East European aid programs

* The discussion aroused in France and Italy by the proposal of *Les Temps Modernes* may be followed in *Atlas,* November 1966, 19-24.

† *The Reporter,* November 17, 1966, p. 14.

** *The Vietnam Hearings,* p. 269.

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recently. It is believed that the North Vietnamese top leadership contains pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese factions or at least tendencies, but after a period of trying to avoid taking sides, the dominant wing under Ho, Professor Honey believes, "swung to the Soviet side in early September 1960." Since then, Ho Chi Minh has continued to maneuver between the two great Communist powers, without ever giving up the historic Vietnamese policy which, as Professor Honey puts it, consists of paying "lip service to Chinese pretensions provided they [the Vietnamese] themselves retained the reins of power in Vietnam."*

There is nothing in ancient or recent history that warrants writing off the North Vietnamese Communists as puppets or satellites of the Chinese. The patent on guerrilla warfare is not owned by the Chinese, and even a common doctrine does not necessarily make North Vietnam subject to Chinese control, any more than a common doctrinal heritage has prevented the Sino-Soviet imbroglio. The mistake seems to stem from a continued reluctance to come to terms with the centrifugal forces in the Communist world. Not so long ago, Fidel Castro was also classified as a Maoist disciple because on some points—revolutionary violence and guerrilla warfare—the Cuban and Chinese doctrines coincided. But this did not prevent Castro from assailing the Chinese leadership early last year in terms more abusive than any the Soviets have ever employed. The present Communist world is full of intersecting lines of tactics and doctrine that can be correlated in different ways, depending on which lines one chooses to correlate. The idea that Ho Chi Minh had to get his "doctrine of aggression" from Mao Tse-tung flatters Dean Rusk as little as it does Ho Chi Minh.

In any case, there is something hallucinatory about the theory that Communist China is the real enemy in Vietnam or that the Vietnamese war is but the preliminary stage of a showdown with China. If there is any truth in either of these propositions, future historians will surely account our Sisyphean labors in Vietnam as one of the greatest aberrations of modern times. The day a war with China materializes, Vietnam will become a remote, inconvenient sideshow from which most of our troops would have to be pulled out in a hurry. The Mekong Valley is about two thousand miles from the industrial and military heartland of Northeast China. The notion that we are weakening, frightening, or deterring China by killing Vietnamese, as if this were a case of mistaken identity, defies all logic and experience. The only thing we are conceivably proving is that if we can bog down in South Vietnam, it should not be too difficult to bog us down in the endless expanses of mainland China.

Yet China is one of the great imponderables in this contest of men, arms, and wills. We may drift, drive, or get dragged into a clash with Communist China. But if this unimaginably horrible calamity should occur, it will make the present Vietnam war less rather than more meaningful. It is madness or frivolity to justify the present war in terms of an infinitely more dubious and appalling war. There is no greater folly in the theoretical apologetics of our Vietnam policy than the premise that the Vietnam war cannot be settled on the basis of internal Vietnam interests, at least as far as we are concerned, without settling the fate of the entire region, let alone that of Communist China. A de-escalation of theory is needed as urgently as a de-escalation of force.

XI

ONE CONTRADICTION in official American thinking is perhaps the most flagrant. American policy is now virtually committed to the permanent partition of Vietnam into two independent states. This policy is, in fact, implied by the line of "foreign aggression," which the Johnson administration adopted in 1965. The previous line of "civil war" did not mean that North Vietnam had watched the struggle in the South with folded arms; there is little doubt that the Communist parties of North and South Vietnam are closely linked, if they are not thinly-camouflaged parts of the same organization; Southern cadres were trained and equipped in the North long before 1965. The qualitative change allegedly came about because the North sent in some of its own regular troops in 1965. Apart from the question whether the North Vietnam action was not retaliatory and even somewhat reluctant, the change in North Vietnamese tactics seems to be a rather inadequate ground on which to make such a far-reaching determination of the future relations between North and South Vietnam. If North Vietnam was guilty of a "foreign aggression," it was a "foreign" country, something that no Vietnamese, including the Southern Premier, Air Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky, seems ready to accept. For the State Department, the theory of "foreign aggression" meant that the Vietnam war might conceivably be settled on the basis of spheres of influence—the South as a client-state of the United States and the North as a client-state of Communist China, assuming that the North Vietnamese would accept that role.

The advocates of Vietnamese partition point to the German and Korean precedents as arguments in favor of this "solution." The three cases are so different that analogies are again dangerous. One cannot possibly compare a prostrate, defeated Germany with a Vietnam that has struggled for over twenty years to recover its national identity. Moreover, the partition of Germany may well be the single most ominous time-bomb in European politics; the recurrent resort to partition as the

* P. J. Honey, *Communism in North Vietnam*, M.I.T. Press, pp. 1-14, 81.

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easy way out is mainly symptomatic of the endemic disease of American foreign policy—that it tends to pay for the present with the future.

But if we were serious about the two Vietnams, the least we could do is to make sure that South Vietnam has an authentically Southern leadership. Premier Ky and his immediate entourage happen to be North Vietnamese. He and those close to him fought in the French armed forces to perpetuate French colonial rule. The symbol of our independent South Vietnamese state is, therefore, a Northern air-force officer, who fought against Vietnamese independence, and is on record with a somewhat ambiguous remark in praise of Adolf Hitler. The latest political crisis in South Vietnam turns on the dissatisfaction of Southern cabinet members with the domination of the Northerners. According to Denis Warner, the Ky regime is being shaken by a "revival of Southern regionalism" (in its own country!); the Northerners are more determined to prosecute the war to the end, even if it means invading North Vietnam, while the Southerners "are more concerned with exploring the paths to peace."* Since Premier Ky and his Northerners could not stay in power any more than Ngo Dinh Diem stayed if the United States did not back them, this is certainly an odd way to promote Southern separatism.

Then there is the little matter of the Geneva Agreements. For ten years after 1955, when Diem disowned them, they did not constitute a problem because they were not considered a basis of negotiation by either the South Vietnam regime or the United States. But in 1965, the United States changed its position and offered to negotiate on the basis of the Geneva Agreements. Unfortunately, the final agreement explicitly stated that "the military demarcation line is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary." Though this agreement went unsigned, it is the only one that has much relevance to the present day. No one has bothered to explain how it is possible to negotiate on the basis of the Geneva Agreements and take the position that the *de facto* partition of the country has become *de jure*. Moreover, the specter of permanent partition has reproduced in a new form one of the chief factors that enabled the Communists to defeat the French; the field of integral, all-Vietnam nationalistic unity has been surrendered to the Communists without a battle.

WHY HAVE WE permitted ourselves to become enmeshed in these multiple confusions and contradictions? Is it because South Vietnam itself is such a vital American interest to defend at all costs? Until recently, no one ever thought so. In 1954, as we have seen, former President Eisenhower decided against an all-out effort and limited himself to an aid program which was not given much chance of success. He made this aid so provisional and conditional that he gave himself room, in another crisis, to do anything or nothing. Yet, twelve years later, it must be repeated, the same man is even willing to entertain the possibility of using nuclear weapons.

The change in Mr. Eisenhower, which roughly corresponds to the change in American policy, cannot be understood in terms of Vietnam alone. It can more nearly be understood in terms of what we have done in Vietnam. As a result of one miscalculation after another, we have gradually been drawn into making an enormous, disproportionate military and political investment in Vietnam. This investment, not the vital interests of the United States in Vietnam, has cast a spell on us. The same thing would happen if we should decide to put 400,000 troops in Mauretania or even Ruritania. Once American resources and prestige are committed on such a profligate scale, the "commitment" develops a life of its own and, as the saying goes, good money must be thrown after bad.

This, to my mind, is nothing to be scoffed or sneered at. It is serious business for a great power to back into a cockpit so far away and so little understood, fling thousands after thousands of men and billions after billions of dollars into it—and then have second thoughts about the wisdom of having gambled so much for so little. The temptation is almost overpowering to magnify the importance of the game, to try to retrieve one's fortunes with one more raise of the ante, to be prisoners of an ever-changing present because looking back at the past is too painful and peering into the future is too unpromising. Above all, there is need for some reassurance that we possess some infallible power to come out right and on top in the end.

That power is now nothing else than—power. From the President down, leading officials have spread the glad tidings that power has given us global responsibilities which seem to be functions not of our infinite wisdom or boundless altruism but mainly of our incomparable power. In his speech at Johns Hopkins in April 1965, for example, President Johnson exhorted that we have the power and now the opportunity, for the first time in centuries, to make nations stop struggling with each other. That is such a large order that the struggle to end all struggles may also be the end of mankind. Not inappropriately, the former Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, and present U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO, published a book last year with the title, *The Obligations of Power*. In it, he argues that the United States must be "so very much involved, in so many ugly grudge fights, in so many places" simply because it is so large and powerful. He bids us "get accustomed to our own power, and to the implications of its global availability." He berates us for still being "unaccustomed to our power, still doubters of our own

* *The Reporter*, November 17, 1966, p. 41.

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prowess." He comforts us with the thought that we do *not* have to be the world's policeman *if* we and other nations can build an international peacekeeping machinery. But no such machinery exists, and its future is more than doubtful. Thus this comfort proves to be cold indeed; we are really being told that we must now be, and probably continue to be, the "world's policeman."*

The prevailing official orthodoxy that power will pull us through has now begun to seep through via journalistic channels. One of the transmission belts for this view put the case this way:

> The central factor in this new picture is power. The cocktail-party philosophers who declare that "there is no military solution" and speak of a struggle "for the hearts and minds of men" cover only a small corner of the truth. The idea of military solutions for political problems went out with the Second World War and no one in Vietnam thinks in these terms. But military success—seizing and exploiting the initiative, harrying and punishing the enemy—is an indispensable condition of political success. With security, everything is possible. Without security, nothing is possible.†

Not so long ago, leading American officials spoke very much the same language as the cocktail-party philosophers above. Secretary of Defense McNamara came close to using their very words. The notion that military success is an indispensable condition of political success begs the question. For is not political success also the indispensable condition of military success? Less than three years ago, the latter proposition was considered the enlightened assumption of American policy. There was even a time when politics was given precedence over power; then power and politics were linked together, each as unproductive without the other; now power has become the precondition of politics which has been retired to some kind of limbo until we have achieved "military success."

The beauty and charm of the new power line is that it postpones serious political reform in Vietnam for the duration of the war. For over a decade, American officials and advisers have been pulling and tugging and hauling to get South Vietnamese regimes to make some meaningful reforms, especially in the sphere of land tenure. The thinking was that it was necessary to win over the peasantry to isolate the guerrillas, and that only serious reforms could win over the peasantry. It now turns out that all this effort was misdirected because it came before rather than after the "military success." The latest wisdom from the embassy in Saigon unwittingly condemns all the fine projects and programs that used to pass for wisdom. Our mandarins cannot have it both ways.

If "security" were all that mattered, former President Ngo Dinh Diem might have made a "political success" of it because he had tight control of the country for quite a few years. And if their mandarins behind Premier Ky ever get that much "security" again, they are hardly likely to do any more or any better. It is naive to imagine that a military regime will celebrate its "military success" by making far-reaching political concessions and basic economic reforms. With security, everything may be possible—but only if there is the right political program, pressure, and will. The last thing that will shake the status quo in South Vietnam is a feeling of "security" by the powers that be.

We have, in truth, resorted to power because our politics have failed. Since no politician can afford to admit this, we must pretend that we are resorting to power in order to make our politics succeed.

XII

THE HALLMARK of the Johnson administration's foreign policy has been its willingness to use and abuse naked military power. In both the Dominican Republic and Vietnam, Mr. Johnson made the critical decisions at about the same time—the first months of 1965. I am quite willing to believe that he sent troops to both lands as a last resort. But the deeper question remains: Why did we have to resort to the last?

As I have indicated, the problem goes far beyond the present administration. The pattern of military intervention on the heels of political failure has run through three very different administrations in three very different countries. One of former President Kennedy's aides has ventured the opinion that he would have done the same thing as President Johnson has done in Vietnam. If so, this only confirms my convictions that the problem goes far deeper than the personal character of any one President. Still, I am not altogether persuaded that Mr. Kennedy would have acted in quite the same way or gone to the same lengths. He did, after all, draw a line barring the use of American combat troops in the Bay of Pigs adventure, and he refused to cross that line despite enormous pressure on him to do so. It is hard to imagine Lyndon Johnson accepting a setback with such restraint and assuming full responsibility for it himself. At least Mr. Kennedy would perhaps have spared us the intellectual gimcrackery and crass pietism that accompany Mr. Johnson's worst excesses.

I am not, by any means, trying to belittle the importance of power in the conduct of foreign policy. On the contrary, I was one of those who warned against the dangerous implications in the line which began to come out of the Soviet Union in 1960 at the height of Nikita Khrushchev's reign. In brief, the Soviet leadership proclaimed that the world had entered a "new stage" in which the "balance of forces," politically, economically, and militarily, had changed in favor of the Soviet sys-

* Harlan Cleveland, *The Obligations of Power*, Harper & Row, pp. 14-16, 135.

† Richard C. Hottelet, *The Reporter*, November 3, 1966, p. 20. Virtually the same words are used by Arnaud de Borchgrave in *Newsweek*, December 5, 1966, p. 55.

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tem. When this doctrine became the leitmotif of Soviet propaganda the following year, I wrote an article for COMMENTARY (November 1961) in which I urged that it was necessary for the West to "find a way to demonstrate that the Soviets are wrong about their 'balance of forces.'" I have not changed my mind in the least about the need at that time, and President Kennedy did find a way to prove the Soviets wrong with the "missiles crisis" in October 1962.

NOW WE HAVE gone so far that we are flaunting our power dangerously. Our policymakers and their intellectual factotums have come perilously close to making themselves believe that the only thing that stands in the way of Communist takeovers all over Asia, Africa, and Latin America is American power. From this premise, it is a short step to basing our policy on our own forces instead of on the domestic forces at work in each country. In each of the three crises which necessitated some form of military intervention in the past six years, the manipulation or even the understanding of the domestic forces at work in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Vietnam was not exactly our strong point. In another famous case, however, we inadvertently permitted the domestic forces in the country to work themselves out more freely. To our astonishment, Communism suffered its greatest defeat in postwar history.

About six months before the abortive Communist coup in Indonesia, the word went out that Indonesia could not be saved from the Communists. "Our government was fully resigned to the potential domination of Indonesia by a Communist party close to Peking, since armed invasion seemed the only way to prevent it," Richard N. Goodwin, the former Assistant to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, has testified.* This resignation to Communist victory was the luckiest thing that has happened to us in recent years. If we had been foolhardy enough to contemplate armed intervention in Indonesia to frustrate the Communists, we would have injected ourselves in Indonesian domestic politics in such a way that we might have ruined everything. Instead, we decided to cut our losses; we did not know what to do, so we did nothing; we closed down our agencies and pulled out our agents. And, lo and behold, the Communists made one misstep, and they are still paying for it. The only credit we can take for our good fortune is that we did nothing to spoil it.

I am not trying to suggest that the best thing we can do everywhere is to do nothing. I am trying to suggest that we cannot and do not have to do everything. Indonesia is a vastly more important part of Southeast Asia than Vietnam, and yet we were resigned not so long ago to its loss to the Communists. Incidentally, it would be fascinating to find out why we could have resigned ourselves to Communist domination in Indonesia but cannot resign ourselves, under any circumstances, to Communist domination in Vietnam.

Indeed, we might have faced the same prospect in Chile but for the electoral victory of Dr. Eduardo Frei. There is no greater likelihood that we could have saved Chile from Communism through military power than that we could have saved Indonesia. Clearly, with all the military power at the disposal of the United States, military intervention is simply not feasible in the larger and more important countries of Asia and Latin America, no matter how close they may come to being taken over by the Communists. In countries of even middling status, we must willy-nilly resign ourselves to the working-out of their domestic political forces.

The war in Vietnam is therefore not a typical situation: it can at best be reproduced only in certain countries at certain times. It is being made to bear too great a load of significance and meaning in order to justify its cost. In countries which do not lend themselves to military intervention, the political instrumentality will continue to make or break us. In countries which for some reason permit military intervention, the political question must still remain uppermost because military "victory" can only be built on a foundation of political defeat.

This is the crux of the matter. When President Johnson fixes visitors with a steely eye and asks them in effect, "What would *you* do to get the Communists to give us an honorable peace in Vietnam?" he is not posing as crushing a question as he seems to think it is. If a patient who has dissipated for years comes to a doctor for an instant cure, the failure to get one may be the fault of the patient, not the doctor. And if the patient also specifies that the cure must be "honorable," any unpleasant diagnosis or course of treatment may not be acceptable to him. In diplomacy, in any case, "honor" is hard to negotiate. It is usually waved as a banner to start a war, not to end one by some means short of victory.

Still, one man has repeatedly given Mr. Johnson an answer to his question. He is U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations. After the fall of the Diem regime in November 1963, U Thant implicitly suggested to the United States the formation of a coalition government in Saigon to take in non-Communist Vietnamese political exiles who believed in the country's neutralization as the way out of the war. U Thant subsequently made known his view that "there was a very good possibility in 1963 of arriving at a satisfactory *political* solution" (my italics, T.D.). This advice was not accepted because the generals who succeeded Ngo Dinh Diem and the new Johnson administration set their sights on "victory," as President Johnson indicated in his message to

* Richard N. Goodwin, *Triumph or Tragedy: Reflections on Vietnam*, Vintage Books, p. 15.

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General Duong Van Minh on New Year's Day, 1964. Two years later, the American position changed, at least publicly, to accept the neutralization of any country in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, if it so wanted.

In September of 1964, U Thant made a determined effort to arrange private conversations between the United States and North Vietnam to end the war. The latter agreed, through the Russians, to a meeting. But repeated efforts by U Thant to get an acceptance from the United States failed. Apparently with the encouragement of the late Adlai Stevenson, then U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., U Thant went so far as to get the approval of Burma to hold a secret meeting there. The Burmese head of state, Ne Win, replied positively on January 18, 1965; the entire plan was vetoed by Washington ten days later. For his pains, U Thant later read in the newspapers that the President's Press Secretary had denied he had ever made any proposal; the denial was so clumsy that the word "meaningful" was subsequently inserted before "proposal" to avoid an outright misrepresentation. The official reason for the rejection given to U Thant by Adlai Stevenson apparently made two points—the United States could not enter into discussions with the Hanoi regime without the presence of the Saigon government, and such talks would risk ruining the morale of the Saigon government. Instead of giving U Thant a chance in January, President Johnson decided to expand the war in February. Again, on March 8, 1965, it has been reported, U Thant proposed a preliminary conference on Vietnam to include the United States, Soviet Russia, Great Britain, France, Communist China, and both Vietnams. The proposal was brushed off by Washington within twenty-four hours.

After again exploring all avenues toward a possible peace for over a year, U Thant privately communicated the result of his search to the United States late in 1965 and made his recommendations public in March and July 1966. In brief, U Thant made known that he had reason to believe that peace negotiations could be initiated on the basis of three points: the cessation of American bombing of North Vietnam; a scaling-down of military activities on both sides in South Vietnam, leading to a ceasefire; and the willingness by all parties to enter into discussions that would include the Vietcong as well as the North Vietnam regime. Again the Secretary-General found that Washington was not interested.* Significantly, two Frenchmen with the closest connections in Hanoi, the correspondent of *Agence France Presse,* Jean Raffaelli, and the former French delegate to North Vietnam, Jean Sainteny, believe that the Communist side would accept U Thant's three-point program as a basis of negotiation.†

Is there anything inherently "dishonorable" in U Thant's three points? I do not think so. If there is, Washington should not have urged U Thant to remain as Secretary-General. We cannot expect any *quid pro quo* for a cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam because North Vietnam is not bombing South Vietnam, let alone railroad lines and oil storage depots in the vicinity of Washington, D.C. The second point entails a military atmosphere conducive to serious negotiations. As for the third point, which is controversial mainly for its inclusion of the Vietcong, President Johnson has said that the representation of the Vietcong would not be an "insurmountable problem." For my part, U Thant's proposals not only are not excessive or unreasonable; they are, in view of all the circumstances, the *minimal* conditions for serious negotiations. If we seriously wanted peace without victory, we would grab at them. The repeated rebuffs to U Thant's efforts will be counted among the most shortsighted and least defensible misjudgments of American policy.

The trouble is that we are still chasing the phantom of military "victory" in Vietnam. It is a phantom because this is not a war that either side can "win" in the conventional sense any more. The South Vietnamese army has already lost it, in all but name, at least twice. It has become a war, which we never intended to fight, of American boys doing what Asian boys should be doing for themselves. It is a war to prove that we cannot be beaten by the North Vietnamese militarily, which does not need to be proven. It is a war which can result in no meaningful "victory" precisely because it has become primarily military. It is a war in which the cost and the return have become hopelessly out of balance and must become more so with every month. It is a war based on the mistaken premise that power can substitute for politics, with the result that we will use more and more power and less and less politics. It is a war in which, in order to "deny" ground to the enemy, we must devastate the land of our friends. It is a war which we may continue to delude ourselves into "winning," but the Vietnamese people can no longer win. It is a war to make guerrillas fade away, as if this were the same thing as doing away with them or removing the political and social conditions which breed and nourish them. It is a war that is isolating us, distorting our economy, and corrupting our intellectual and political life.

In such a war, the *least* we can and should do is to give U Thant's proposals a chance to pull us and the Communists out of the morass. It is a measure of the American crisis that even critics of

* This summary of U Thant's efforts is based mainly on Franz Schurman, Peter Dale Scott, Reginald Zelnick, *The Politics of Escalation in Vietnam*, Fawcett, pp. 26-34; Mario Rossi, the *New York Review of Books*, November 17, 1966, pp. 8-13; Emmet John Hughes, *Newsweek*, December 12, 1966, pp. 62-63.

† *War/Peace Report*, October 1966, p. 3.

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American policy in Vietnam, who see clearly all the past defects and future dangers, cannot free themselves from the incubus of military victory. Richard N. Goodwin could think of nothing better to end his otherwise thoughtful and critical essay than to recommend a continuation of the war in the South. We should not, he gravely counsels, spare manpower or money to retake "mile by painful mile."* In an essay which ranges far and wide, he does not so much as mention U Thant's efforts or proposals as a possible alternative to this forbidding and probably futile course. If President Johnson's policy has such critics, it does not need any defenders.

The latest military course on which we have embarked already appears to be one more makeshift and improvisation. It depends for its success not merely on the feasibility of the American forces to retake "mile by painful mile" but even more on the ability of the South Vietnamese army to "pacify" the countryside. American "search-and-destroy" operations will admittedly fail of their ultimate purpose if they are not backed up by effective "clear-and-hold" operations. Thus, one way or another, we cannot decide the issue by ourselves. We are again entrusting the crucial social mission of this war to the South Vietnamese government and army, no matter how poorly they have performed and how little faith we may have in them, simply because we cannot do that job ourselves. We may try to oversimplify the post-1965 stage of the war as a "foreign aggression," but we cannot escape from the realities of the "civil war" or rather the complex of civil wars—Communist against anti-Communist, peasant against landowner, civilian against soldier, Southern Southerners against Northern "Southerners."

The American military are so little optimistic about the new strategy that some of them are already preparing correspondents and public opinion for the next phase. A "widely respected American commander" told Richard Dudman of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* (July 8, 1966): "We should occupy and rule this country instead of pretending to respect the sovereignty of a government that really is only temporary and illegal and could change tomorrow. It would be more efficient and probably the end result would be better if we abandon the idea of assistance and pacification and settled for subjugation, regarding South Vietnam as an enemy country." If this appears hard to believe, Marvin L. Stone has reported in *U.S. News & World Report* (December 5, 1966): "Some ranking military men insist that the 1967 experiment with the Vietnamese forces is going to prove a year of costly waste—and that the U.S. should face up to reality if it wants to win this war, mobilize reserves and Guardsmen at home, send in an additional 400,000 men and take over the 'other war'—the sooner the better." But Stone notes, this "reality" is so unpleasant that other Americans consider it to be the "worst mistake" we could make.

The only certainty is that the goal of military "victory" requires either a sudden Communist collapse to bring the war to a halt rapidly or a long war of attrition which will demand more and more American manpower. Stone tells us that all the Americans on the scene seem to have the same timetable—one or two years of regular army operations to break down the enemy's main-line forces followed by five to ten years to bring down the guerrillas. The more we stress the strictly military side of the prospective "victory," the more we encourage pressure in the United States to save lives and money by using more and more extreme military measures, from the invasion of North Vietnam to the employment of nuclear weapons. If the pessimists are again right, the next stage of this war may bring us to the brink of frightfulness; it may tear the conscience of this country apart; it may bring on a hunt for "guilty men"; and the guiltiest may do most of the hunting.

In these circumstances, does it still make sense to pretend that there is no use taking seriously U Thant's proposals? The longer we wait, and we may have waited too long already, the higher the price must be. But at least, it will signal a change in national attitude and policy, without which we cannot plead innocence in the court of mankind.

THE AMERICAN CRISIS is bad enough when we consider how hard it is to get out of this inopportune and thankless war. But, whatever one may think about getting out, there is still the larger and deeper crisis of how we got into it, and how we got into the Cuban and Dominican military interventions. We cannot continue to live wholly in the moment, snatching at every status quo, however rotten and unstable, to hold the line against Communism at whatever cost, transfixed by the terminal stages of the disease. In the new worship of power, we are squandering our power by using too much too frequently and too maladroitly. All great powers which have overestimated, overindulged, and overextended their power, have come to grief. Unless we can break the sinister cycle of political ineptitude and military intervention, the Johnson administration may be turning a corner in American history and may be heading toward the same abyss. Whatever one may think about the present military imperatives, the larger historical problem is political and social; we cannot go on failing politically and "succeeding" militarily without ultimately inviting disaster beyond anything yet known to the world. The President and his closest associates might do worse than take a few minutes to reacquaint themselves with what was said of another military victory by Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, in 279 B.C.

* Goodwin, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

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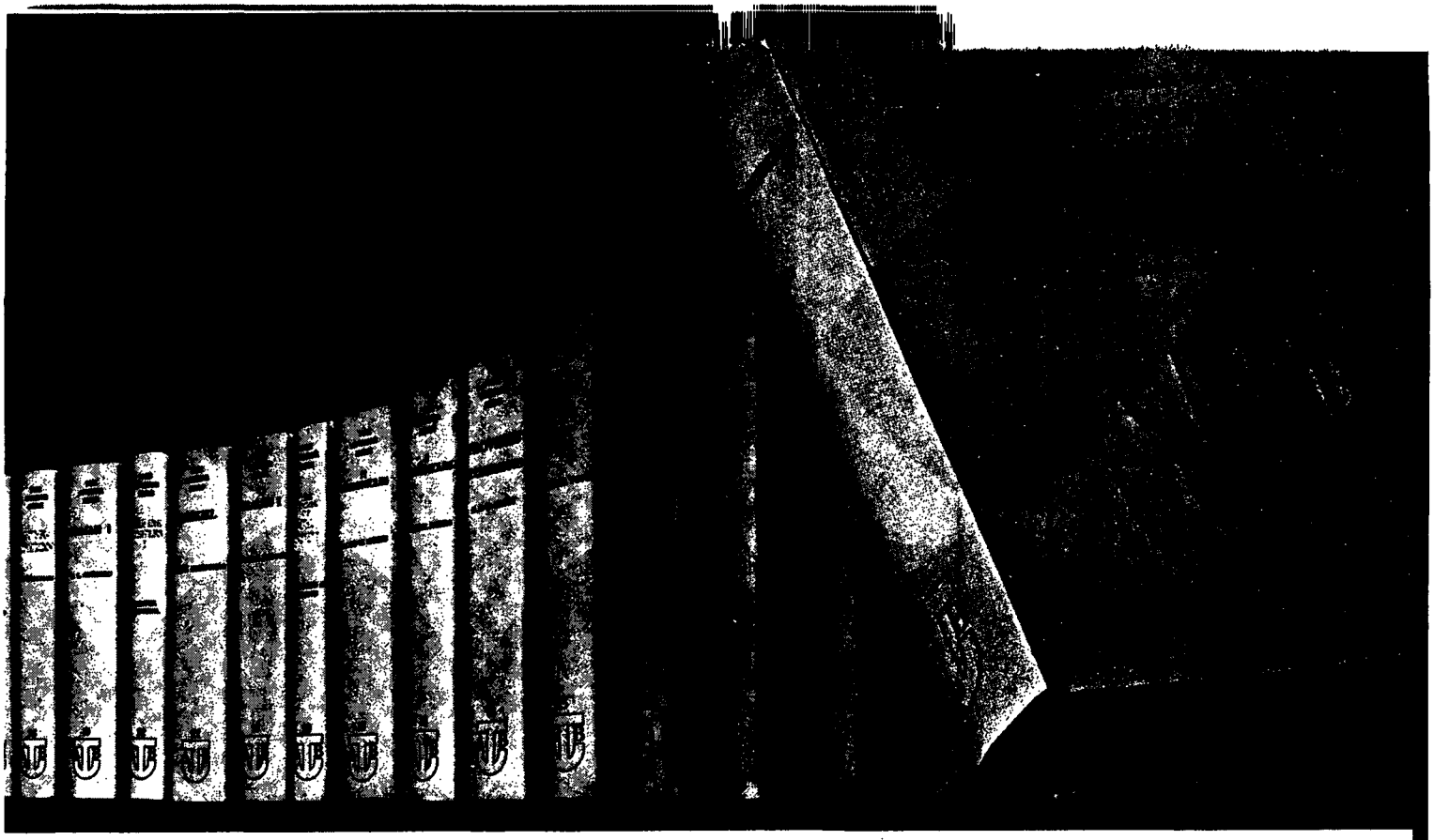

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*David Daiches, COMMENTARY, September 1965

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ERICH ISAAC

THE ENIGMA OF CIRCUMCISION

IN OUR TIME, ritual observance of all kinds has become problematical not only for non-believers, but for the thinking adherents of the various faiths as well. In most other respects, religions have not fared badly in the modern world, but ceremonial practices have proven vulnerable. As the historical roots of rituals have been uncovered, the constant temptation has been to abandon them on the ground that while they made sense in their time and place, they are now anachronisms. The decline in the observance of *kashruth* among Jews is a case in point.

The theological defense against this trend has been weak; the attempts to justify ritual usually confine themselves to stressing its value for religious survival, its aesthetic quality, and above all its social and psychological usefulness. Thus, one finds that ritual among primitives is tolerated, or even admired, because of its "functional" aspects, so crucial for the currently dominant anthropological perspective.

But what is the anthropologist—or anyone else—to make of the mysterious rite of circumcision? Its widespread practice among primitive people is hard to explain by any reference to function or utility, and the only attempt I know of in this direction is singularly inept: it has been held that circumcision helps savages to distinguish male from female. Most anthropologists have avoided such absurdities at the cost of avoiding explanations altogether; they have been content with a mere description of circumcision as a primitive rite of passage or initiation.

The mystery deepens when one looks into the practice of circumcision among the Jews. Not only did this ritual flourish in ancient Israel—hardly a primitive people—but it continues, in marked contrast to *kashruth,* to be practiced almost uniformly by Jews today. Moreover, it has, until recently at least, been taken so much for granted that it never provoked nearly as much discussion or elicited as much interpretation as did ritual food prescriptions. Hence the Catholic scholar Roland de Vaux could rightly note in 1961 that "nothing useful . . . apart from dictionary articles" had lately been written about circumcision in ancient Israel. Circumcision has continued to be practiced by Jews in the absence of either a fruitful articulation of its roots in the past or a theological interpretation of its meaning for the present.

In their absence, the commonly accepted "explanation" has been that circumcision confers great medical benefits. It is an idea at least as old as Philo of Alexandria (1st century C.E.), who maintained that it prevented disease and promoted fertility. The modern Jew has been comforted by the knowledge that medical value has been attributed to the ritual, even as he has been reassured by its practice among a great part of the non-Jewish population, at least in America and England. Recently, however, the practice of circumcision as a hygienic measure has been subject to a two-pronged attack. Its presumed medical and physiological advantages are said to be at best unproven and at worst illusory, and the manner of its performance is said to be frequently incompetent or cruel. The latter charge has been directed almost as much against physicians as against ritual circumcisers, or *mohalim,* who in this country do not have to meet any legal certification requirements. A few of them, by botching the operation, bring on complications which are sometimes serious and irreversible.

It is symptomatic of the newly critical attitude that a sensationalized attack on circumcision appeared in the July-August 1966 issue of *Fact,* a magazine which describes itself as "An antidote to the timidity and corruption of the American Press." *Fact* had apparently been brooding about the subject for some time; a full year before the attack appeared, I had declined an invitation from its editors to write just such an article. Presumably it took something of a hunt to find Dr. Foley, a West Virginia physician, who finally accepted the assignment. While the author begins by raising pertinent questions about the meaning of circumcision, he focuses primarily on the motivation of those who perform the act and the alleged consequences of the practice. He finds the explanation for the widespread acceptance of circumcision in the "perverted component of the circumciser's libido" and "the sadism of the crypto-pervert." The reason American mothers have gone along with the operation is that they

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are hostile to their male children: "It is one way an intensely matriarchal society can permanently influence the physical characteristics of its males." According to Dr. Foley, homosexuals and anti-Semitic Jews are especially warm advocates of circumcision, as indeed are all men who have already been circumcised and therefore suffer from "foreskin envy."

There have, however, been more serious challenges to the routine practice of circumcision. For example, Dr. Charles Weiss, formerly head of the division of microbiology at the Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia, has collected evidence that renders doubtful the widespread assumption that circumcision helps to prevent genital cancers in both sexes. He points out that earlier studies supposedly proving this have been refuted by now, so that at the present time there is no conclusive evidence of any kind that circumcision has any prophylactic value whatsoever.

This challenge from within the medical profession has played into the hands of that segment of the Orthodox Jewish community which is intent on affirming the strictly religious character of circumcision, and thus on eliminating the medical aura surrounding the practice. Some Orthodox Jews, including some doctors, go to the extreme of arguing that no physician should perform religious circumcision, even if he meets all the requirements of personal orthodoxy and piety. Thus, Dr. Joseph Miller, writing in the organ of the union of Hasidic rabbis of the United States and Canada states that he

> has refused to accept the role of *mohel* for . . . Jewish newborn males in order to uphold [its] religious character. . . . If a physician were to be a . . . *mohel*, this may impress on the mind of the public the idea that only a physician could be trusted with *milah*. This misunderstanding may lead easily to using non-religious or even Gentile physicians for the performance of this holy act.

In *La Circoncision* (Paris, 1952), Charles Merzbach, a French Jew, Orthodox scholar, and a physician, takes a similar position. Immanuel Jakobovits, the new chief rabbi of England, does not oppose the performance of *milah* by Orthodox physicians but he too is worried about the emphasis on the medical value of circumcision. Thus, he condemns the practice—which used to be common among Orthodox Jews in Germany and is now the standard procedure among Orthodox Jews in Italy, Norway, Sweden, France, Australia, and Argentina—of having circumcision performed by a "secular" physician while a rabbi or cantor is in attendance. In a letter to Dr. Weiss, who is by no means opposed to ritual circumcision but who recommends the above practice for the United States, Rabbi Jakobovits writes: "The whole essence of the operation is that it is a religious and not a medical act, and this significance is usually lost when the operation is assigned as so much surgery to a physician. The presence of a rabbi or cantor would merely make matters worse by religiously endorsing the medical character of the act."

At a time when—at least in this country—most non-Jewish males are being circumcised, the extreme Orthodox position must be understood as an anxious attempt to preserve the specifically *Jewish* meaning of circumcision. The deliberate removal of the rite from the medical sphere does not, to be sure, provide a clue as to its true meaning; it does, however, clear the air for a reconsideration of its religious significance. Such an inquiry must begin with an examination of the biblical passages concerning circumcision.

II

Circumcision is a surprising rite to find prescribed in the Bible. It was, of course, widely practiced among Israel's pagan neighbors: Jeremiah mentions Egypt, Edom, Moab, and the Arabs (along with Judah) as being circumcised in the flesh, though not in the heart. But the whole tenor of the Bible is against the pagans and their practices; moreover, it is, in general, strongly opposed to any form of bodily mutilation or deformation, ritual or otherwise. Thus, tattooing and scarification, for example, are forbidden for the explicit reason that the Israelites are the children of God. The prohibition of scarification even extends to animals, which become ritually inadmissible if marked.

The commandment to circumcise males is held by Jews to derive from God's commandment to Abraham, in Genesis 17, to circumcise every male child on the eighth day of his life as a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham and his descendants. According to an accompanying provision, slaves—both native and foreign, and regardless of their age at acquisition—are also to be circumcised. Beyond that, few details are given concerning the performance of the rite in ancient Israel. The stipulation of the eighth day is repeated in Leviticus (12:3); and in Exodus (4:25) and Joshua (5:2-3) one discovers that flint knives were used for the operation. The Bible contains no ruling about the place for performing the operation; however it never occurs in a sanctuary, nor is it ever performed by a priest.

The unsatisfactory character of most explanations advanced for biblical references to circumcision can be illustrated by the treatment accorded to Exodus 4:19-26, admittedly the most difficult of all the passages on this subject. Moses is on his way back to Egypt from Midian with his wife Zipporah and his children. "And it came to pass on the way at the lodging-place, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a flint, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet; and she said: 'Surely a

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bridegroom of blood art thou to me.' So he let him alone. Then she said: 'A bridegroom of blood in regard to the circumcision.' "

The interpretations of this passage have usually been even more peculiar than the passage itself. For example, Eduard Meyer, Georg Beer, and Elias Auerbach maintain that the story deals with the *ius primae noctis*; the god is struggling with Moses for his right. Zipporah quickly grasps the danger to her husband, circumcises her son, and with the bloody foreskin smears the god's sex organ in order to make him think that this is the mark of his first night with her. It is hard to determine whether these leading scholars gave less credit for intelligence to Zipporah or the god, since both would presumably have been aware of the presence of Zipporah's child, a presence which renders any reference to *ius primae noctis* mysterious indeed.

There have been other dubious interpretations of this passage, although none which so totally disregards the text itself. The late Chief Rabbi Hertz of Great Britain maintained that the story is an anthropomorphic way of saying that Moses fell ill because he postponed the circumcision of his son and that Zipporah therefore performed it for her disabled husband. Earlier commentators on the text tried to overcome some of the embarrassment to which the passage gives rise by stating that an angel tried to slay Moses for having so long postponed the circumcision of his son. Some interpreters even claim that the passage refers to the circumcision of Moses himself, which is doubtful not only because of the text's specific reference to "her son," but also because Moses had been adopted by Pharoah's daughter and circumcision was an ancient—though not universal—Egyptian custom. Needless to say, psychiatrists have not passed up the obvious opportunity the passage affords for the application of psychoanalytic insights. According to Andrew Peto, the story represents a biblical interpretation of the Oedipus conflict: the son-hating mother symbolically castrates or kills the boy because the father has failed to do so. The aggressive Yahweh-father is thus appeased, the Moses-father is preserved, and Moses and Zipporah live happily ever after.

The most intelligent explanation of the passage comes from Hans Kosmala, a member of the Swedish Biblical Institute of Jerusalem, who solves much of the difficulty by disposing of Moses altogether as an actor in the story. The incident occurs just after Moses has been directed to tell Pharoah that the first-born sons of Egypt will be slain. According to Kosmala, the "him" whom the Lord met and sought to kill in the text is not Moses but Moses's son, who was in danger of sharing Egypt's fate, since he was with his Midianite mother. Zipporah promptly circumcised him and said, "*hatan damim attah li*," customarily translated "a bridegroom of blood art thou to me." But, as Kosmala notes, Zipporah was a Midianite and in her language *hatan* was the word for circumcision. What she said, then, was "You are mine, circumcised with blood." The text strives to point this up by stressing that *she*, the Midianite, called circumcision in *her* language *hatan damim*. Otherwise the repetition of the statement, "a bridegroom of blood" is pointless. With Moses absent, and the "bloody bridegroom" eliminated, the difficulties of the story disappear.

BUT THE greater mystery remains: why should circumcision have been the mark of Abraham's covenant with God? Biblical commentators have expended surprisingly little effort in confronting this question. Rashi merely notes that there are midrashic stories about it, including one that says circumcision makes man more perfect by removing an existing flaw. Some traditional and Hellenistic interpreters offer utilitarian explanations, along the lines of the one advanced by Philo. Others, like Josephus, look on it as a way of preserving the Jews' separate identity. Still another tradition views circumcision as a mystical rite, but this interpretation is strongly opposed by normative Jewish exegesis. More recently, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) claimed that the purpose of circumcision was to affirm that man's body, as well as his soul, is hallowed by God, and that the infliction of the mark of the covenant on man's most animal part served to symbolize this affirmation. Such moralistic and symbolic exegeses have been characteristic of the last few centuries; the identification of circumcision as a primitive practice and the challenge of an environment that put a premium on assimilation made it necessary to find explanations that would render the rite "acceptable." Hirsch's interpretation may indeed perform such a function, but it too fails to shed much light on the real meaning of circumcision.

Nor is it very helpful, when attempting to understand circumcision as it is described in the Bible, to turn to those scholars who concentrate on its practice among various primitive tribes. Herbert Spencer thought that originally circumcision was a rite performed on war captives as a sign of their subjugation. The anthropologist Westermarck held circumcision to be a device, like other bodily scarifications, for attracting the opposite sex. Frazer suggested that the reason for circumcision was that the foreskin was to provide power (Mana) which could be drawn upon by the disembodied spirit at the moment of reincarnation. An enumeration of all the theories that have been advanced would allow the reader to marvel at the imagination of modern social scientists, but it would scarcely enhance his understanding of circumcision. Suffice it to say, then, that circumcision has been connected, among other things, with ancestor worship, sacrifices to goddesses of fertility, tribal marks, methods of warding off evil, mating devices, marriage rites, and puberty rites.

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Though widely divergent, these theories tend to have something important in common: the fact that circumcision involves the sexual organ has led most of those who have attempted to find the meaning of the rite to focus narrowly on its sexological aspects.

III

IT MAY, however, be the case that the sexual aspect is incidental to circumcision, at least as it was practiced in ancient Israel. One is in any event led to think so by a close reading of the biblical text—which is all we really have to go by.

The Bible treats circumcision as a visible sign of God's covenant with Abraham. Actually, two covenants with Abraham are recorded in Genesis. In the first one (Genesis 15), the Lord promises Abraham—whose name is still Abram—that he shall inherit Canaan. Abraham asks for a sign and is told to divide a calf, goat, and ram, and align the parts in two rows, at the end of which a dove and another young bird are to be placed undivided. Then, in a dream vision, Abraham sees an epiphany of the Lord pass through the divided animals. Rite and vision culminate in God's declaration: "Unto thy seed have I given this land. . . ." In the second covenant (Genesis 17), the promise of the land is repeated and expanded. Abraham is now told that he will have a multitude of offspring, and that from him will spring "a multitude of nations." The Lord changes Abram's name to Abraham, repeating the promise to make nations from him and adding "kings shall come out of thee." God affirms that the covenant shall be everlasting, "to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." He demands that every male shall be circumcised on the eighth day as a sign of the covenant. Sarai's name is changed to Sarah; she is promised a son and also promised that "she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be of her."

There are several ways to approach this passage. One may look for a clue to Abraham's circumcision in the link between circumcision and the promise of offspring. The rite then becomes a purely medical operation to remove an obstruction which made the patriarch infertile. And of course, after the surgery Sarah does become pregnant with Isaac. This interpretation—offered by Vanier du Harve in 1847—entails only one difficulty: Abraham already had a child by Hagar.

A more fruitful approach would seem to be to stick as closely to the text as possible and thus to consider circumcision as a covenant rite. The two covenant ceremonies performed by Abraham are related: in each there is a cutting. It therefore seems plausible that biblical circumcision can be understood as a special case of the ancient custom of using cutting or dismembering rites in connection with treaty and covenant obligations. There is an abundance of evidence to suggest that this was a widespread custom indeed. Jeremiah mentions a dismembering rite similar to Abraham's first covenant ceremony: the nobility of Judah pledge themselves to set their slaves free by dividing a calf and walking through the parts. There were Hittite rites in which troops passed through divided animals and men to signify the renewal and strengthening of a covenant. In Africa there are even today many covenant rites involving the lengthwise division into equal parts of at least one animal. Moreover, one can find parallels to Abraham's first covenant ceremony among both the Greeks and the Romans.

In this respect, it is also significant that the biblical term for covenant-making is *likrot berith*, the literal meaning of which is "to cut a covenant." Moreover, some biblical scholars have argued that *berith*, though it certainly means "covenant" in the contexts in which it is used in the Bible, was originally a preposition meaning "between" so that *likrot berith* may actually mean "to cut between." Thus, the biblical terminology also suggests a close association of covenants with cutting.

The meaning of that close association is not, however, clear. The division of animals in two as a covenant sacrifice, which is found so widely, has been explained by anthropologists as a conditional self-cursing: the human participants in the covenant agree to sharing the fate of the animals, should they break their oaths. Indeed, this is the way Jeremiah understood the rite of the Judaean nobility. But the deeper significance of the rite, which had its origin in a pre-Hebrew world picture, may have eluded Jeremiah just as much as it may today elude its pagan practitioners and their anthropological observers.

The whole notion of cutting as a covenant sign seems strange to us, for we associate covenants and treaties with binding together. Yet it was the *cutting* of the Gordian knot by Alexander the Great which was to bind Asia and Europe together, and even today we cut silk ribbons when inaugurating bridges and highways; we thereby symbolize the joining together of places that were previously separate. In terms of ancient ritual too, the act of severing was not symbolic of separation, but rather of a prior and subsequent state of wholeness. The ritual worked both backward and forward in time. It worked backward because it stipulated that in the mythical past the partners to the covenant had been united or at least closely bound together; it worked forward because it asserted that the partners, though separated now, belonged together as parts of an original whole. In the ceremonial, a mythical past is recreated to give substance and status to an alliance directed to the future.

There is some evidence that early circumcision among the Jews involved only a simple cutting. The kind of circumcision performed in the case

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of Abraham may well have been the incomplete circumcision which M. Merker found among the Masai in the first years of this century. In this operation the foreskin is cut but not removed. The "second circumcision" mentioned in Joshua (5:2) may refer to the completion of the operation; indeed, an old Jewish tradition maintains that this is the meaning of the passage. The tradition is repeated by Rashi, who states, "Our rabbis said that 'a second time' refers to the tearing off [of the praeputium] which was not required of our father Abraham." Moreover, there is evidence that incomplete circumcision was practiced as late as the Greco-Roman era. Because he was an object of derision in the gymnasium, the circumcised Jew often subjected himself to an operation to conceal his circumcision. It was to obviate this possibility that the rabbis made *periah* (complete exposure of the glans) a prerequisite for ritual circumcision. While the operation as now performed is thus the outcome of anti-pagan ordinances, pagan ceremonial—reworked to give it Jewish associations—also found its way into the ritual during the Greco-Roman era. For example, the "throne of Elijah," upon which the child is put at the beginning of the circumcision ceremony, apparently derives from the thrones reserved for "divine" visitors to Roman child-naming ceremonies.

EVEN IF WE accept the hypothesis that biblical circumcision is a covenant rite (which is, after all, what the redactors of the biblical text claim it is), the full meaning of circumcision is bound to elude us, for it grew out of a world picture whose psychological foundation must remain foreign to us. Nor can one make an easy equation between the meaning the rite may have for present-day primitive people, and its meaning for the Jews, with their long history. With the passage of the centuries, circumcision, the spilling of the blood of the covenant, has inevitably taken on new associations for the Jews. The blood of the covenant has become the blood of Jews who were killed because they kept the covenant; the central importance which circumcision assumed in the mind of the occidental Christian, for whom it defined the Jew, has lent force to this association. I suspect that psychological depth-studies would reveal that the historical and religious experience of the Jew has virtually wiped out any sexual meaning the ritual may once have had for him. However, such studies might well show that even for Orthodox Jews the "blood of the covenant" symbolizes not only Abraham's covenant with God but also the blood of Jewish martyrs.

Consciously, of course, the Orthodox Jew is simply obeying a commandment when he agrees to have his male children circumcised. If pressed for the meaning of the rite he would probably agree with Zacharias Frankel, the head of the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary, who understood circumcision as a sacramental act that establishes the religious community of Jews. Frankel was not completely correct, to be sure: unlike baptism, circumcision does not establish the male child as a Jew. If he is born of a Jewish mother, he is a Jew in the eyes of Jewish law and remains one whether or not he is circumcised. Circumcision does, however, act as a sacrament for the convert, and it is a powerful symbol of the Jews as a community of faith.

Yet circumcision remains a mysterious rite, and one that must to some extent be problematical even to the Orthodox Jew, especially when it is stripped of its medical aura. For circumcision is a blood rite, and Judaism is clearly at variance with the idea of blood rites.

This, incidentally, may be precisely that "function" of circumcision which anthropologists have overlooked: to be at variance, to serve as an unmistakable reminder that religion is not a system of autonomous ethics, to teach the Jew who accepts this covenant rite that morality must be understood as commanded rather than as part of a rational natural order.

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ROBERT LEKACHMAN

DEATH OF A SLOGAN—
THE GREAT SOCIETY 1967

A VIABLE POLITICAL CONSENSUS rests upon an expectation of benefits by all members of the coalition. Any actual payoff, of course, gives rather more reward to some than to others, but in spite of their inevitable inequities, consensual arrangements often persist, since those whose share is scantiest either assent to the larger share of others, feel powerless to improve their relative situation, or sense that any alternative feasible political commitment would be still less advantageous. There is also a final requirement for a continuing consensus: those who profit the most must be willing to grant at least something to their partners.

Even before the dramatic Republican resurgence in November, it was evident that Lyndon Johnson's odd coalition of big businessmen, trade unions, liberal intellectuals, white ethnic minorities, and Negroes had begun to disintegrate. What had previously held these strangely assorted groups together was the common belief that progress was being made simultaneously toward all their disparate goals. Some of the sturdiest defenders of the new faith were to be found, for instance, in the business community, whose more enlightened members had at length perceived that the kind of economic expansion generated by conservative, Keynesian-style fiscal policy could really lengthen business booms, increase profits, and even improve the prestige of American business at home and abroad. Slow to learn, these business leaders ultimately embraced the New Economics of tax reduction with the enthusiasm of converts —even when such reduction flagrantly violated older budget-balancing taboos. (That the New Economics also altered income distribution in the direction of the propertied classes was more easily forgiven.)

The trade unions did conspicuously less well with the Johnsonian consensus. Throughout the six-year upsurge, the real incomes of factory workers lagged far behind the improvements in profits signalized by the reports on earnings for each quarter. Worse still, the President failed to deliver on such key legislative pledges as the repeal of Section 14 (b) of Taft-Hartley and the enactment of federal standards for state unemployment compensation programs. Adding insult to these injuries, Mr. Johnson irritated good trade unionists by his reiterated endorsement of the bruised wage-price guideposts. Since labor had no place to go, union leaders took what comfort they could from the decline in unemployment, gratifying quantities of overtime, and the realization that the President's bark was considerably more fearsome than his bite. In the summer of 1966, airline workers and General Electric employees revised the 3.2 per cent guideposts upward. Their 5 per cent settlements have been tacitly accepted by the President and his advisers as the new ceiling on contract gains.

There was probably never a time when liberal intellectuals precisely admired Lyndon Johnson, although the more politically involved, like J. K. Galbraith and Walter Heller, took some pains to maintain a public manner of respectful comment upon, rather than open criticism of, the administration's economic and foreign misadventures. The glamor of the Kennedy style and the Kennedy court—no doubt exaggerated in lengthening retrospect—was in itself sufficient to delay any easy transference of personal allegiances; Texas hyperbole will never ring pleasantly in ears accustomed to New England understatement. All the same, so long as the President proposed, and Congress accommodatingly enacted, a flood of education, medical, anti-poverty, and regional-development programs, even carping intellectuals could not entirely withhold the credit that was the due to the Texas prestidigitator.

As for Negroes and their leaders, to their astonishment they found themselves living with the most militant advocate of civil rights ever to occupy the Presidential office. In 1964 and 1965, two major civil-rights acts promised at last to commit the national government to voting rights, effective integration of schools, and fair employment practices. For a while, Martin Luther King was as welcome in the White House as he was in Stockholm, where he received his Nobel Peace Prize.

It is of some historical interest to identify the favorable circumstances which conspired to re-

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lease this surge of Presidential and congressional activity. To begin with, some important measures were already far advanced in the legislative pipeline at the time of President Kennedy's assassination. In all probability, the tax cut and the first civil-rights measure would have become law early in 1964 even if Mr. Kennedy had lived. The issue of general aid to education dates back to church-state and federal-local wrangles during the Eisenhower years, and Medicare's legislative history can be traced back at the least to the Truman administration. Even the War on Poverty, billed as the first original Johnson program, had been prepared in the Kennedy Council of Economic Advisers and the Kennedy Department of Labor. All this is a way of saying that the first session of the 89th Congress looked so impressive for precisely the same reason that a hill in Kansas looms like a mountain: the surrounding terrain was exceedingly flat.

To be sure, even these moderate achievements required for their completion the assistance of Barry Goldwater. His inept campaign presented Mr. Johnson with the first liberal Congress in a generation and quite possibly the last one for another period of similar length. Nor would the President have been able to push his program through Congress were it not for the general climate of prosperity. Between 1960 and 1965, this prosperity—which bestowed its greatest benefits on proprietors, businessmen, and the professional classes—and the policies of two Democratic Presidents cooperated to raise corporate profits 52 per cent before taxes and 67 per cent after taxes. Dividend payments to stockholders rose no less than 43 per cent. By contrast, the take-home pay of factory workers increased only 21 per cent, or in real terms, 13 per cent. The fact is that at present levels of Gross National Product, taxes are running $20 billion lower at the federal level than they were before passage of the Kennedy-Johnson tax measure in February 1964. The appropriate contrast here is with the total cost of the welfare measures enacted in the last three years. These are budgeted at $6.2 billion for the current fiscal year, less than a third of the tax slashes. Medicare—not included in this computation—is financed by highly regressive social-security taxes, the heaviest burdens of which fall upon the neediest prospective recipients of assistance.

As it stands, this comparison is striking evidence of just how much Americans have preferred private disposable income to social improvements. Indeed, this preference is even more striking than the crude figures might imply, particularly if one takes into consideration those whom the tax and welfare measures were meant to assist. No doubt a trifling percentage of the tax-cuts improved the situation of the poor, but it is most certain that the bulk of the "welfare" expenditures flowed to the middle and upper income classes in the form of subsidies to college dormitories, libraries and laboratories, scholarships and fellowships, and relief from a portion of the local tax burdens imposed by the support of public elementary and secondary schools. In a period of economic expansion, the managers of the Great Society found themselves able to finance generous tax reductions and modest increases in social spending out of large annual increases in national output.

This political idyll ended because it proved impossible to accommodate both Vietnam and the race issue within the terms of Johnsonian consensus.

II

As 1966 BEGAN, the President was faced with some unpleasant economic facts. Completing an unprecedented fifth consecutive year of business expansion, the country at length gave signs of incipient inflation. The continuing investment boom was being stimulated by generous tax concessions. Consumers were spending with nearly equal enthusiasm. And above all, there was escalation in Vietnam. Like everything else about the war in Vietnam, its costs are obscure. It is possible that at the start of 1966 they were running at about $1-1.5 billion per month. It is likely that at year's end they had risen to $2-2.5 billion each month. Yet even if we take the highest of these figures, our expenditures in Vietnam still add up to less than 3 per cent of Gross National Product. Moreover, total defense spending in 1966 turned out to be a mere 8.2 per cent of GNP, less than 1 per cent higher than the mid-1965 figure. A Council of Economic Advisers possessed of this information, assured by the Department of Defense that the Vietnam war would be liquidated by June 30, 1967, faced by a 4 per cent rate of unemployment (still high by European comparisons), and briefed by a President openly uneager to increase taxes, might well conclude that no tax hikes were essential.

Such arguments perhaps seemed plausible last January; by the end of 1966, they had lost all credibility. Prices had indeed bestirred themselves, doubling their general rate of advance and ascending still more rapidly in the politically sensitive food sector. One response—originating in Denver and then spreading East and West—was the militant supermarket boycotts organized by discontented housewives. In Vietnam, the military spoke amiably of a need for 600,000 or 700,000 men, presumably for purposes other than those of witnessing North Vietnam's signature to a June 30, 1967 treaty of peace and amity. Moreover, defense spending was taking on a critical significance far beyond that indicated by simple numbers and percentages. Thus, in the third quarter of 1966, a rise of $4.2 billion in defense spending amounted to nearly one-third the total increase in GNP. For the year as a whole, defense productivity probably

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approximated 25 per cent of the rise in durable goods shipped and 29 per cent of the increases in capital investment. In the last twelve months, the armed forces have inducted 40 per cent of the total increase in the labor force. What counts in an expansion is the source of new gains. These gains are more and more substantially traceable to Vietnam.

IT IS POSSIBLE that the President did not himself foresee the scale of Vietnam expenditures. Conceivably, he hoped that the peace offensive in the spring would result, if not in a truce, at least in de-escalation. But certainly he would not have welcomed the suggestion that taxes be raised. Indeed, almost any purely fiscal response would have endangered his consensus: tax increases large enough to be effective would inevitably displease prosperous corporations and individuals. Practitioners of the New Economics might argue to their heart's content that the tax cuts of 1964 and 1965, far from being intended as favors to the unneedy, were designed as technical devices to stimulate a lagging economy; but while they might convince themselves and their students, the economists were unlikely to persuade the ordinary citizen, who had comfortably adjusted to lower taxes, that now was the time to surrender his privileges. Any President contemplating higher taxes could scarcely remain unmindful of the electoral fate of those governors who had raised taxes within their own constituencies. True, the electorate could not retaliate against Mr. Johnson until 1968, but it could certainly decimate the Democratic congressional majority.

The fiscal alternative to higher taxes is reduced public spending, but this too is easier stated than achieved. The fact is that the bulk of public spending at the federal level is set by the requirements of defense and foreign policy, interest service of the national debt, or the needs of politically potent client groups—veterans, farmers, shipowners, and congressmen whose re-election may hinge on the construction of new post offices, bridges, harbors, and the like. After these needs have been met, precious little money remains for all the other programs of social spending. Yet social spending is just about the only convenient candidate for reduction which still remains. Programs in this sphere are the newest and the least protected by bureaucratic and congressional interest. Some portion of the funds disbursed assist social and economic groups whose influence is slight and whose turnout in elections is small. Even so, it is still far from easy to save money. The education programs are dear to the hearts of the middle classes. The poverty programs are the pride and joy of liberal intellectuals and the civil-rights establishment. Their sacrifice could not have been painless to that side of Lyndon Johnson which takes populist pleasure in social improvement.

Even a less expert politician than the President would have sought to blur the issues. Mr. Johnson's actual budget represented an attempt to temper the financial trend by restricting the expected growth of poverty, education, and housing programs, and by making a series of cuts in more established activities. The Presidential strategy emerged clearly in the course of the testimony offered by the Budget Director, Dr. Charles Schultze, to the House Committee on Appropriations last January. At the request of the Committee Chairman, Congressman Mahon, Dr. Schultze set forth an extensive list of budget reductions. It is a politically illuminating list, worth the trouble of excavation and reproduction:*

(1) Grants for schools in federal impacted areas: NOA (New Obligational Authority) down from $397 million for 1966 to $206 million for 1967.

(2) Grants to land-grant colleges: NOA down from $12 million for 1966 to none for 1967.

(3) Grants for airports: NOA down from $75 million in 1966 to $50 million for 1967.

(4) REA telephone loan program level in 1967 reduced to $85 million from $101 million in 1966.

(5) School lunch program: NOA down from $202 million for 1966 to $183 million for 1967.

(6) Special milk program: NOA down from $103 million for 1966 to $21 million for 1967.

(7) New construction starts:

(a) Watershed protection: 80 new construction starts in 1966, 35 in 1967.

(b) Corps of Engineers: 66 new construction starts in 1966 (41 proposed, 25 added by Congress), 25 in 1967.

(c) Bureau of Reclamation: 12 new construction starts in 1966 (10 proposed, 2 added by Congress), 4 in 1967.

(8) Agricultural research cutbacks:
Grants to the agricultural experiment stations are being reduced by $8.5 million for research and $2 million for facilities. Certain pest control and disease programs are being curtailed or eliminated. Research facilities are being closed or cutbacks undertaken in 69 locations.

(9) Ship construction subsidies: NOA down from $132 million in 1966 to $85 million for 1967.

(10) Economic development facilities grants: NOA is down from $203 million in 1966 to $175 million for 1967.

(11) FNMA (Federal National Mortgage Authority): No new commitments are planned to purchase single-family mortgages in urban renewal and armed services housing programs—expenditures down by $47 million in 1967.

(12) NASA research and development: NOA down from $4,503 million for 1966 to $4,247 million for 1967.

*Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, 89th Congress, Second Session, p. 65.

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(13) AEC:
- (a) Weapons program: Operating costs are down $53 million to $639 million in 1967.
- (b) Experimental gas-cooled reactor is being terminated.
- (c) Medium power reactor experiment is being terminated.
- (d) Project Rover: Operating funds are down from $84 million in 1966 to $78 million in 1967.

(14) VA hospital and domiciliary facilities construction: NOA is down from $91 million for 1966 to $52 million for 1967.

(15) Military construction and family housing: Expenditures are down by $325 million in 1967 because of deferral of projects not vital to the military effort in Vietnam.

One noteworthy element of this shopping-list was the inclusion of a number of cuts in programs venerated by many congressmen. These included grants for schools in the federally impacted areas, the school lunch program and the special milk program, as well as the porkbarrel items lumped together as New Construction Starts. More than one congressman suspected the President of having cunningly included these economies rather more to enhance his own reputation for fiscal prudence than because he genuinely anticipated that Congress would allow the slashes to pass unchallenged. At any rate, the official administration line became clear when Dr. Schultze informed the Committee that the Bureau of the Budget and the President had between them shaved $9 billion off the amounts requested by the civilian agencies of the national government. The President was simply enacting another episode in the ongoing competition between Presidents and Congress to see which one can cut public spending the more decisively. Altogether, it was a poor atmosphere for the flowering of Great Society programs, especially the more controversial novelties like job camps, rent supplements, and assaults upon urban ghettos.

One supposes, nevertheless, that the outcome could have been still worse. Congress extended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act until 1968, authorized $6.2 billion for fiscal 1967 and fiscal 1968, and, incidentally, substantially expanded the President's request for assistance to the impacted areas. If anything, Congress was still more enthusiastic in its devotion to higher education. It added a billion dollars to the administration's National Defense Education Act proposal, approved a student loan program which Mr. Johnson had sought to eliminate, and continued NDEA pretty much in its present form. Slightly older legislation of promise, such as the Community Mental Health Centers Act—enacted during the Kennedy administration—was expanded and adequately funded.

Also on the credit side, Congress approved several regulatory measures which, although rather mild, have at least established the principle of federal responsibility and may some day, in a happier legislative climate, serve as useful precedents for genuinely effective regulation. Aided immeasurably by the stupidity of the automobile industry, which first denied any responsibility for the safety of its products and then set detectives on the trail of Ralph Nader, Congress actually strengthened the weak, discretionary measure that the administration had advocated and passed a statute requiring the Secretary of Commerce to draw up mandatory safety standards for all new motor vehicles by January 31, 1967 and to impose them twelve months later. Congress increased funds for checking water pollution to $3.6 billion over the next five years, and slightly liberalized the grant formulae in favor of the cities. Truth in Packaging—Senator Hart's administration-backed bill—fared less well. The bill sought clear and accurate labeling of packages, elimination of deceptive practices, and mandatory standards of weights and measures. Congress, responsive to the delicate attentions of food processing and supermarket lobbyists, gutted the labeling and the weights-and-measures provisions and authorized the Secretary of Commerce—at no time a militant defender of the consumer interest—only to seek voluntary weight and size standards. Although Senator Hart courageously professed himself pleased with the new law, few outsiders (least of all members of the food industry) were able to see wherein lay the source of his pleasure.

In short, if the 89th Congress took pains to avoid giving serious offense to any major industry, it did write some legislation which is susceptible of future expansion. That is the best that can be said of this Congress. Its real failures were in the sphere of imagination and innovation.

III

Despite the inexorable escalation of the Vietnam war, it is possible that Congress might have broken some genuinely new ground in 1966, had it not been for one thing: the race issue. In this regard, the November elections merely registered what liberal and moderate politicians had sensed much earlier. In retrospect, it seems depressingly obvious that middle-class white society was willing to support Negro aspirations just so long as they were gradualist, peaceful, and directly imitative of white, middle-class models. All it took was a few riots, some signs of dissatisfaction with white styles of life, and a slight indication of "overreaching" for the white community to react in fear, rage, and thwarted righteousness. When a Pat Brown in California retreats from an open-occupancy measure (and loses the governorship all the same), when a decent, liberal congressman like Seymour Halpern opposes New York's civilian review board, when a primitive like Lester Maddox can defeat an Ellis Arnall,

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and when a Lurleen Wallace becomes the governor of a sovereign state, then clearly the uneasy, tentative, frightened white acceptance of civil-rights legislation and of genuine improvement in the Negro situation has broken down—rather more spectacularly in the morally "superior" North than in the benighted South.

This mood of retreat had predictable effects upon the congressional agenda. Although it did not imperil education measures whose benefits were spread widely throughout society, the racial issue was responsible for such unedifying diversions as the harrying of Henry Howe, the new Commissioner of Education, for the sole reason that he took seriously the desegregation guidelines which in fact only reflected the intent of Congress at the time the education bills had been passed and which, for that matter, followed the practically prehistoric directive of *Brown vs. Board of Education*. Again, although the new mood did not interfere with the funding of medical research projects so treasured by elderly congressmen, Congress did its best to soften the enforcement of desegregation in hospitals. One episode in particular was symbolic. Of the many responsibilities lodged in the office of the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, one entails the supervision of integration in federally assisted hospitals. The Department's current regulation "allows persons to be placed in segregated rooms upon certification by their physician that it would be detrimental to the person's physical or mental health to require placement in integrated quarters." Presumably, this provision protects the lives of violent segregationists hospitalized with heart ailments. At the same time, however, HEW checked regularly to ascertain whether in fact the certification procedure was being used to mask patterns of consistent segregation. If the Department's investigators found such patterns, then the Secretary might actually withhold federal funds, pending assurance of compliance. In the last Congress, Senator Stennis all but got his colleagues to prohibit HEW from imposing "any requirement of accountability" on hospitals or medical facilities once certification had been made. HEW was to be prohibited from penetrating beneath the appearances to the realities. The segregationists did not win this battle outright, but they did impose a certain caution upon public officials responsible for health and education programs.

The white backlash had its largest impact upon the poverty program and the new housing proposals. As far as the poverty program is concerned, the figures tell a tale all by themselves. The President initially requested $1.75 billion, much less than the program's administrators and clients had hoped for. Congress actually appropriated $1.6 billion—a 10 per cent cut in a new program which normally would have received very substantial increments, particularly for such successful programs as Head Start. Possibly the cuts themselves were less damaging than the assorted restrictions which Congress wrote into the law. The net effect of these restrictions was to prevent Sargent Shriver from shifting funds among programs; the specific targets were the community-action and job-training programs—the most controversial and yet the most promising innovations in OEO's history.

As of now, the future of OEO seems very much up in the air. The old-line agencies which from the first viewed it hungrily now seem ready to gobble up the dismembered fragments. Legal services to the poor may migrate to Justice; Head Start to Health, Education and Welfare; the Job Corps to the Labor Department; and so on. The prospect contains a moral: in an era of backlash, the War on Poverty looks suspiciously like a Negro-aid program, and is therefore ripe for destruction.

Two new departures in housing bills have also been suspected of giving excessive aid to urban Negro populations. The rent-supplement program received a ludicrous $12 million and may expire this coming year. As for the Demonstration Cities program, it very nearly perished before its legislative birth, but it just possibly may turn out—if it, too, is not starved to death in the new session—to have been the most important act of the 89th Congress. As is obvious to everyone by now, the most frequent effect of urban renewal has been to destroy housing accommodation for the poor while providing inadequate substitute housing. Also, urban renewal has visited upon New York such monstrosities as Robert Moses's Coliseum. It has not even so much as nibbled at the central problem of urban ghettos in New York and other major Northern cities. As the fate of New York's civilian-dominated police review board and the outcome of the Douglas-Percy, High-Kirk, and Reagan-Brown races demonstrate, there is probably a large white-middle-class majority which opposes any substantial Negro breakout from these ghettos. Hence, it is hardly astonishing that the Demonstration Cities program survived Congress only after the bill's language was altered to make certain that the measure would not be used to promote housing integration. Fears of this sort explain why Congress reduced what was originally a $2.3 billion authorization for a five-year period to a $1.2 billion authorization for a two-year period, and why a mere $11 million was appropriated for planning purposes. What will come of Demonstration Cities depends upon the shape of urban politics over the next three or four years. Just conceivably, President Johnson may be right, and the new approach may promise the "rebirth of urban America." If, however, the Act is distorted into familiar porkbarrel shape, it may come much closer to Senator Dirksen's amiable judgment that "it has all the prospects . . . of becoming one of the greatest boondoggles that this country has ever witnessed."

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In today's political climate it seems grimly probable that the only urban demonstration projects that stand a chance are those which leave racial housing patterns substantially undisturbed. Are better ghettos preferable to worse ones? Presumably they are. A few improved ghettos are probably the most we can anticipate from Demonstration Cities until white attitudes alter sufficiently to accept the fact that the only meaningful desegregation will take place right next door, all over the country.

IV

How, then, is the Great Society likely to fare in the two years before the next Presidential election? Not very well. Even so unpopular a war as Vietnam diverts resources from peaceful uses and arouses emotions hostile to social improvement. Although we may count ourselves fortunate that none of the more ferocious hawks won contested congressional seats, further escalation may well heat up the atmosphere, and will inevitably intensify the pressure to curtail domestic spending. Inflationary signals and rising war costs are likely to force a choice between really substantial tax increases and severe expenditure limitations. If we are fortunate, such programs as Community Action, Head Start, job camps, rent supplements, and Demonstration Cities will suffer only from malnutrition. If we are less lucky, they will perish.

In the period we are about to enter, those programs which are strongest—because they do most for the prosperous and least for Negroes and the poor generally—will become increasingly consolidated. The education acts will be preserved and their benefits enlarged, for as every member of the middle class knows, in a meritocracy it is the academic degree that counts. Medical programs will also receive generous appropriations. As usual, after some initial resistance the prosperous will come to appreciate just how readily social spending can be converted to the advantage of those who need it least.

Possibly Mr. Johnson went just about as far as a conservative politician in a conservative, racist country could have gone. The Great Society has distributed the nation's income even less equally than it was distributed before 1960. It has enlarged the prestige and influence of the business community. It has lost its token bouts with racism and poverty. The Great Society, never a giant step beyond the New Deal which was President Johnson's youthful inspiration, has ground to a halt far short of a massive attack on urban blight, far short of the full integration of Negroes into American society, and far short of a genuine assault upon poverty and deprivation. These are the unfulfilled aims of a true effort to realize a Great Society.

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Race Wars in the Making

GEORGE LICHTHEIM

LONDON: Now that the race wars of the coming decade are beginning to cast their premonitory shadow, it may be useful to look at some of the factors underlying the current disintegration of one of the few hopeful inventions in the field of race relations: the British Commonwealth. By using this topic as a starting-point, we may arrive at conclusions applicable further afield—as far removed indeed as China's "cultural revolution." For the threatening upheavals in Africa, India, and the perimeter of China, do seem to have something in common. But first a glance at what is happening in those regions where until recently it seemed that orderly progress had become possible: the formerly British-controlled territories of the African continent.

To single out the problems of these newly independent countries is not to assert that their case is hopeless, or that their affairs are worse managed than those of other regions. Nor is it to cast any special reflection on the performance of their elites. There have been disappointments—Ghana being the outstanding case—but by and large the Africans have surprised their critics by throwing up an unexpectedly large number of competent politicians, and one or two genuine statesmen. Few of the expected disasters have actually occurred. The unending shambles in the Congo is probably the fault of the Belgians. And by comparison with the usual crop of uniformed assassins and civilian pickpockets in Latin America and the Middle East, even the shadier African politicians do not look particularly disreputable.

The current mood of pessimism in London is due to something more fundamental than the oddities of Dr. Nkrumah or even the recent tribal bloodletting in Nigeria. It stems from a growing conviction that these troubles, like those of the Congo, must be expected to continue for some decades. Allied to this depressing picture there is the mounting tension between Europeans and Africans in those parts of the continent where British and other European immigrants have settled in large numbers: principally the Union of South Africa and the neighboring territory of Rhodesia. These areas, not accidentally, are foremost in industrial development, so that black-white cooperation is most threatened where it is most needed. Nigeria and the Congo (not to mention the former French territories, which merely squabble among themselves, but are otherwise peaceful) present simple problems. Their regimes are busy trying to make nation-states out of tribal conglomerations, and this effort, while doubtless a lengthy business, is no threat to anyone, and does not preclude tolerable relations with the West. The potential explosive lies elsewhere: in South Africa, and in the British attempt to mediate the Rhodesian quarrel.

The extent to which this topic has altered the political climate may be judged from the fact that the continued existence of the Commonwealth is no longer taken for granted even by its stoutest defenders. Since last autumn, it has become evident that its survival is not a top priority either for the British or for most of their African and Asian associates. The twenty-three member governments (their number, paradoxically, is growing all the time) still value the "club" as a convenience, but they no longer place Commonwealth solidarity ahead of all other considerations. This change of sentiment has been most dramatic among the British, who used to worry over threats of walkout, whereas today such warnings are greeted with a mixture of irritation and indifference. Nor is this attitude confined to Conservatives impatient with the growing number of Afro-Asian members. It has spread to Liberals and Labourites, and is certainly shared by the public at large. The Commonwealth is now seen as an association which imposes burdensome commitments and acute embarrassments, while yielding small influence and prestige. Above all, it is perceived as a focus of racial tensions from which virtually everyone in Britain would now like to withdraw.

The Rhodesian entanglement has served as the test of genuine, as distinct from rhetorical, commitment to the goal of racial cooperation. By this standard it may be said that the British have opted for a quiet life not bedeviled by the specter of race conflict. Rhodesia offered a readymade challenge to the kind of statesmanship the Labour party was supposed to embody. Its recent "rebellion," pitting two-hundred thousand whites against four million blacks, could have been resolved by a simple assertion of British sovereignty

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(in law still applicable), plus a general "declaration of intent" to the effect that the country's independence would eventually be recognized on the basis of majority rule. Mr. Wilson, with his usual talent for making the worst of all possible worlds, missed the chance to win a painless victory which would have given him the prestige he craved for. He could have ended the rebellion in forty-eight hours by a suitable show of force (probably not even involving any bloodshed). He preferred two years of dithering, endless maneuvers that lost him the confidence of the Africans without winning the esteem of the Europeans, and at the crunch could not even bring himself to utter the saving words "majority rule," for fear of offending the white "moderates." The upshot has been a tangle which at the time of writing looks insoluble, with Rhodesia drifting simultaneously toward internal violence and external reliance upon the Union of South Africa: itself the biggest keg of dynamite on the African continent.

Meanwhile, British public opinion, already lukewarm about Africa despite the relative success of self-government in Kenya and elsewhere, has stiffened against further concessions to African nationalism. In the Conservative party, the drift has now reached the point where a majority would probably welcome the departure of some of the Afro-Asians, while an increasingly influential right-wing faction has come out publicly in favor of a racial alignment grouping Britain and the "Old Commonwealth" of white-settler nations (Canada, Australia, New Zealand) with the United States and South Africa: the argument being that South Africa and Rhodesia are worth more economically than all the African states now clamoring for a boycott of these two outcasts. As one of the proponents of this line, Mr. Patrick Wall, put it (see the London *Daily Telegraph* of September 8, 1966), "Is it worth losing these economically powerful countries to maintain the questionable friendship of certain African members who are already actively increasing their association with the Communist powers?" Here the economic argument serves to underpin an emotional commitment to white-settler solidarity, but it also camouflages an unspoken conviction among Conservatives: namely, that the coming showdown with China is going to involve an Afro-Asian rebellion against white dominance. Those who hold this view are among the advocates of an "Atlantic" alliance grouping in one bloc all the defenders of "white" civilization. No doubt they have their counterparts in the United States and elsewhere.

While officialdom resists this trend, it has no convincing alternative to offer, for the Commonwealth is becoming unpopular. It is increasingly regarded as a nuisance by the convinced "Europeans" (many of them liberals and socialists) who want Britain to join the Common Market, and for different reasons by the Tories who refuse (as they put it) to be dragooned into a campaign against white settlers for the benefit of the new African states. Multi-racialism still has its defenders—it is after all the establishment creed, as well as being the only possible formula for a worldwide grouping which enables Britain to exercise some influence in Africa and Asia. But skepticism is mounting. One can hear it said that if the Commonwealth does not break up over Rhodesia, it will break up over some other issue—a renewal of the conflict between India and Pakistan, or a clash between Singapore and Malaysia. On the last occasion when they met, the Asian members held their peace while the conference wrangled over Rhodesia. This spectacle is unlikely to be repeated. Suppose Pakistan brings up the Kashmir issue, or India demands to know whether she can count on united backing against China? For all the headlines it has been getting, Africa is essentially a less important continent than Asia. Currently, the global storm-center is in the Far East. Continued absorption in African problems can only result in making Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the other Asian members, feel that the Commonwealth has become an irrelevance. Certainly Vietnam looms larger in their eyes than does Mr. Smith's rebellion in Rhodesia. Yet Rhodesia has symbolic importance, since what is at stake is precisely the multiracial principle on which the Commonwealth is founded. If Britain cannot successfully arbitrate this conflict, then the idea of a worldwide association of states and nations cutting across racial boundaries (and across the frontier dividing the rich from the poor) will have to be abandoned.

II

WHAT IS involved in such an admission can be measured against the menacing backdrop of impending trouble in South Africa—whose government withdrew from the Commonwealth in 1962 rather than subscribe to racial equality. Coming at a moment when the British government had just made its first tentative move to "get into Europe," this withdrawal portended a major reassessment of the Commonwealth's place in the world. Four years later, matters had reached the point where a moderate Conservative spokesman saw nothing but disintegration ahead:

> Two countries have already left the Commonwealth because their racial policies were unacceptable to the rest. The federations of Central Africa and Malaysia have broken up for racial reasons, and that of Nigeria is in serious trouble. Racial resentments have been rife in Canada, Guiana, Ceylon, and threaten the Union of India. Cyprus is virtually partitioned. The Government of Kenya is taking repressive measures against an Asian minority. Even the mother country has experienced racial strife.*

* Angus Maude M.P., writing in the *Daily Telegraph* of September 6, 1966.

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The reference to Canada is somewhat irrelevant—what is going on there hardly fits the pattern of "racialism," being rather reminiscent of the endemic nationalities conflict in Belgium. Cyprus perhaps bears some resemblance to Palestine (not mentioned by the author, though its partition in 1947 set the ball rolling). The other areas have the added misfortune of being poor and undeveloped, as well as strife-torn. India, the largest and most important, still includes some forty million Moslem citizens who must dread the prospect of another war with Pakistan. For good measure, the Indian Five Year Plan has been a failure (though officially this is not admitted) and the country now faces the prospect of a growing food shortage. Something like a disintegration of the administrative machine appears to have set in at the provincial level, but the spokesmen in Delhi are as optimistic as ever. It is true that Indians have a marked capacity for wishful thinking. Even so, it comes as a surprise, after the failure of the Third Plan (1961-5) to get the economy off the ground, to read official statements such as that "the country, at the beginning of the Fourth Plan, is poised for a faster growth during the years to come." Faster than what? The Third Plan absorbed an investment of almost 14 billion dollars, and at the end the average citizen was slightly worse off than before. The Fourth Plan has been described as "a carbon copy of the Third, only twice as big," and the bazaar wags are already saying that when it is completed the average Indian will be twice as badly off. Whether or not this happens will, it seems, depend on the monsoon and other climatic factors. If all goes well (but why should it?) food-grain production will have risen by 50 per cent in five years, and even so India will have to import 20 million tons by 1970 to keep from starving. In reality it is improbable that the country will be able to feed itself, even with the aid of American shipments. As in the past, officialdom is taking a gamble on the weather:

> The Plan exercise therefore hinges once again crucially on the performance of the Indian farmer and his pair of bullocks. Since between them they contribute something like 50 per cent of the national output, it is they who carry the glittering modern steelworks and petrochemical plants on their backs. When they fail, as they did last year, everything else goes to pieces.*

It is worth staying for a while with these prosaic facts and figures. They are not, of course, peculiar to India, but for a number of reasons India's case is the worst of the lot. The public is now slowly beginning to digest the meaning of documents such as the United Nations "progress report" of October 1966, summaries of which have appeared in leading American and European newspapers.† What immediately catches the eye, of course, is the expected jump in world population—from 3.4 billion in 1965 to 5 billion in 1985: an extra 1.6 billion people to feed, of whom one billion will be in what it is now customary to call the "developing countries" (400 million of them in China, North Korea, and North Vietnam). But the joker in the pack is the disclosure that even if all plan targets are reached, the gap between the rich and the poor countries will widen still further. On the most hopeful assumption, gross domestic output per head of population in the "developing countries" is expected to rise on average from 133 dollars in 1965 to 255 dollars in 1985. Meanwhile the industrial nations (including, of course, the USSR) can confidently expect to double their already tolerable income, bringing it to an average of 3,000 dollars per head in 1985 (5,000 dollars for North America, as against 160 dollars for India). At the lower end of the scale (in effect for three-quarters of the world's inhabitants) food will still be the most important item in 1985, and it is by no means certain that India and the rest will actually have got beyond their present starvation level. Even to get rid of their worst calorie shortage they will have to double their food output. After that, they will merely go on suffering from protein deficiency. . . .

In a rational world some of these problems could be solved, or at least eased, by regional cooperation. In the words of the FAO report summary printed in the London *Times* of October 19, "it should be possible for Near East countries to supply those of East Africa with cheap fertilizers, while surplus food production in East Africa—particularly meat and maize—could go some way towards meeting the Near East's growing food deficit." This remark affords an interesting sidelight upon a region which only recently possessed a political center: both East Africa and what is conventionally known as the "Near East" used to belong to the British Empire, which may be the reason why their problems are still followed with interest in London. The same cannot be said of Southeast Asia, if one excepts Malaya and Singapore; but then this part of the world has come to benefit from Washington's special attention. If nothing else, fear of China will probably see to it that the area is not neglected. Whether the system of alliances sponsored by the United States will effectively cut across the division between the haves and the have-nots, remains to be seen.

Meanwhile the future shape of things can be accurately guessed from the recent upheaval in

* *The Statist*, London, September 16, 1966.

† E.g., the New York *Times* and London *Times* of October 19, both reporting the statement made in New York the day before by Dr. Binay Sen, director-general of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. It was in the course of this that he remarked, "If the rate of food production cannot be significantly increased, we must be prepared for the four horsemen of the Apocalypse." See also the Indicative World Plan for Agriculture prepared by the FAO and summarized in the London *Times* of the same date.

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Indonesia. No one (not even the authorities in Jakarta) knows exactly how many people were slaughtered in the villages following the suppression of the Communist rising. The true figure may be between a quarter of a million and twice that number. What *is* known is that the massacre also had a racial aspect: since China was supposed to have backed the abortive coup, and since the Chinese minority was unpopular (though for reasons having nothing to do with Communism, the Chinese element having mostly been made up of shopkeepers and petty merchants), there ensued a large-scale outbreak of racial murder for which the anti-Communist campaign afforded an excellent cover. By now, in the tranquil phrase of the London *Economist* (November 5, 1966), "The Indonesians seem to have stopped the killing of their local Chinese, but are in no loving mood towards the large proportion of the community that survived." Nor, for that matter, is there any love lost between Chinese and Malays in what is left of the federation of Malaysia (minus Singapore). The virtual breakup of the federation was hailed by the Indonesian government, in an official statement, as "a victory for the Malay race": a phrase that caused consternation in (mainly Chinese) Singapore. These are the realties of Southeast Asian politics today. It is just as well to be clear about the significance of a term such as "nationalism" in that part of the world. What it comes down to is the slaughter or expulsion of ethnic minorities, whether Indians in Burma, Chinese in Malaya and Indonesia, or Tibetans in China. Against this background, the determination of the Singapore government to preserve a British base in its territory occasions no surprise. But what happens when the British pull out, as in the 1970's they are expected to do? Americans who pride themselves on their country's new status had better be warned that they are going to inherit this seething cauldron of hatred and massacre, along with all the other imperial responsibilities they are now busy acquiring.

III

In the short run, needless to say, none of this compares in importance with the emergence of China as a nuclear power and the extra twist thereby given to the Sino-American confrontation. It is only when one tries to fit the nuclear factor into the geopolitical context that one begins to get a notion of the sort of "world order" likely to emerge in the 1970's, when most of China's neighbors will be living under the threat of Peking's nuclear blackmail. The October 27 missile tryout was clearly timed to coincide with Mr. Johnson's descent on Manila. According to the official Chinese communique, "the guided missile flew normally and the nuclear warhead hit the target at the appointed distance, effecting a nuclear explosion." It seems to be agreed that the range of the missile was probably between five hundred and seven hundred miles—still a long way from the intercontinental weapons China is expected to have in ten years, but already quite enough to worry the Japanese and others in the region. To cite the *Economist* once more, "It so happens that the perimeter of Peking's missile range is just about concurrent with the Chinese view of their rightful sphere of influence." Had they so desired, the Chinese could in fact have dropped their missile on Manila while Mr. Johnson and his six Asian allies were in conference. No doubt, they had sound reasons for refraining from so dramatic a gesture.

It is also arguable that, as between China's medium-range potential and America's long-range arsenal, most of the smaller Asian countries are likely to feel safer on the American side. But this sort of reasoning appeals to diplomats and soldiers rather than to the man in the street. The latter is quite likely to say that there would be less cause for worry if the Americans were to remove their bases. Then, indeed, China would be the paramount power in the region, but what of that? Someone has to call the tune, and as long as there is no threat to his person, the average inhabitant of, say, Laos or Thailand may well come to feel that a degree of subservience to Peking is not too high a price to pay for the preservation of what passes for peace and quiet in that part of the world.

At this point one is apt these days to encounter the argument that (knowing or sensing all this) Washington is busy, all of a sudden, trying to improve relations with Moscow. This is doubtless very true. It is also somewhat irrelevant, though for reasons having little to do with the Vietnam war which is always mentioned in this connection. The fact is that even if the slaughter in Vietnam could somehow be halted and some sort of acceptable compromise patched up, the problem of containing an increasingly nationalist and bellicose China would still loom as large as ever. Nor is it altogether easy to see what the Russians could do to make it easier.

If the experts can be trusted, there is at present no disposition in Washington to take China seriously as a military threat. It seems to be believed that, with the present balance of forces, American land power does not have to be permanently employed on the Asian mainland, and that the forces now in Vietnam can safely be withdrawn once this particular war is over. For technical reasons, Korea is seen to be the only area in which Chinese ground forces could rapidly be deployed on such a scale as to make any difference. For the rest, China's capacity for making trouble is thought to be limited to "wars of liberation" on the Vietnamese pattern, and the Pentagon seems to think there is a military answer to this particular challenge. In short, China is regarded as a

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paper tiger. It is also thought that the rift between Peking and Moscow is now past mending. All the news coming out of Moscow and Eastern Europe these days suggests that the Soviet leaders are increasingly pessimistic about the conflict—even to the point of reckoning quite seriously with the future possibility of a Chinese military threat along the Soviet Union's Asian border.

It is tempting to conclude from all this that the task of keeping China under control is certain to push the U.S. and the USSR closer together—all the more tempting since the Chinese themselves never tire of proclaiming that the imperialists in Washington and the revisionists in Moscow have already made a secret pact to set up a world directorate. In point of fact, there are few signs that this is about to happen. On the other hand, there is some evidence that the Kremlin is exploiting Peking's verbal belligerence, and Mao's semi-crazed domestic tyranny, for the purpose of reinforcing its own hold over most of the Eastern bloc. In a situation where America and China confront each other as enemies, and where China seems to have temporarily gone mad, it is comparatively easy for the Russians to win prestige and popularity all over Asia.

There are signs that this is happening. Thus Indonesia, having broken with Peking, nonetheless conserves its ties with Moscow. It is not without interest that the Russians seem to have urged the formation of a new, legal, and pro-Soviet, Communist party in Indonesia, to replace the shattered hulk of its Maoist predecessor. If the military rulers of Indonesia should take the hint, we may witness the spectacle of Moscow trying to reduce Chinese influence by way of playing the national-Communist card. In an area where all the nations surrounding China—above all India and Japan—are actuated by a mixture of fear and respect, this strategy offers the Russians larger dividends than a straightforward deal with America. For the same reason, it seems unlikely that Moscow will discontinue its limited support for North Vietnam. Unlike the Americans, the Russians are not involving themselves in any war there. On the other hand, they are not renouncing their role as the protectors of revolutionary movements. For the Soviet Union to appear openly aligned with America would be self-defeating. Just because China is a threat to them, the Russians cannot afford to do without the support of local Communist forces.

Lastly, there is the impact of China's internal upheaval. Of this it may safely be said that it has already confirmed Moscow's worst fears by pushing the army leaders to the forefront. Out of the clash between the ossified party apparatus, which Mao is apparently trying to dismantle, and the juvenile Red Guards, the army seems certain to emerge as the real winner. In this context it is immaterial whether—as the Russians seem to think—Chinese opinion is being deliberately prepared for future hostilities against the Soviet Union. What matters is that, for the first time since Mao came to power, the army is taking precedence over the party. The discrediting of the party goes hand in hand with the eradication of the last faint traces of pro-Soviet sentiment. Chinese Communism is being fused with the ancient chauvinist xenophobia. In future, China's rulers will be free to move in any direction, untrammeled by ideological considerations, for the official ideology will have been reformulated so as to legitimize in advance any and every extension of China's power—now declared to be synonymous with the cause of world revolution. The mass hysteria which has been worked up is unlikely to be guided into domestic channels: for the simple reason that there are none left. It is hardly possible to make constructive use, e.g., for economic purposes, of the kind of primitive emotion Mao has unleashed. There remains the task of "liberating" China's neighbors—or those formerly Chinese territories now belonging to the Soviet Union.

If it were possible to treat Maoism as a phenomenon belonging uniquely to the "ideological superstructure," one would have to pronounce it a forlorn hope. After all, what could be more utopian than to proclaim complete equality, and spartan austerity, as the aim of the revolution, at the very moment when China's rulers are desperately trying to turn the country into a major industrial and military power? A modern industrial base cannot be constructed without a large degree of social inequality. Technicians and scientists must be given privileges, and the emergence of something like a class society must be tolerated. Mao's egalitarianism made sense in Yenan, and during the first few years after the revolution, when it was a matter of winning the loyalty of peasants and workers, but it is inappropriate to the present stage. A country that wants this sort of Communism had better renounce the aim of becoming a major industrial power. Inversely, if China is to rival the U.S. and the USSR, Mao's "cultural revolution" is a luxury it cannot afford. Whichever way one looks at it, the experiment seems foredoomed to failure.

But although this is true, it does not alter the fact that immense energies have been mobilized in the pursuit of a utopian goal—energies that must be discharged in one form or another. China *cannot* at one and the same time become a great power and a classless society. A choice will have to be made, and it will be made by the army leaders whom the last furious spasm of the revolution has hoisted into the saddle. When that time comes, China's neighbors, and the remainder of Asia, will indeed have cause for worry.

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Exhibiting the Lower East Side

ROBERT ALTER

The Jewish Museum did such a thorough job conjuring up group memories in its ambitious exhibition devoted to the Lower East Side that I was moved to wonder just what purposes such memories ought to serve. The exhibition was described in the catalogue, somewhat ominously perhaps, as a "multi-media environmental study," and audiences were in fact exposed to as much of the variously recorded experience of a particular time and place as could reasonably be crammed into half-a-dozen sizable museum rooms. Being the kind of person who likes to contemplate objects on display in quiet concentration, I am not sure I altogether liked this bombardment of exhibits—it is not easy, for instance, to make out a memorandum by Louis Marshall or a passage from Jacob Epstein's *Autobiography* while Zero Mostel's recorded reading of letters to the *Forward* rumbles at one ear and the unrelenting drone of a Hester Street huckster assaults the other. But this is probably a cranky prejudice of mine deriving from the benighted age before we realized that media were messages, messages environments, and so forth: the exhibition as a whole surely represented an admirable effort at the total presentation of a subject, its variety was instructive, and the materials were put together with a considerable degree of professional finesse.

Those materials included: photographs by Jacob Riis, Lewis Hines, and others, of the East Side streets and tenements during the great period of immigration; a brief film on immigrant life made in 1915; the recorded voices of Boris Thomashevsky, Molly Picon, Maurice Schwartz, and other luminaries of the old Yiddish stage; newspapers, communal documents, posters of the period; sewing machines and irons used in the sweatshops; paintings of the East Side milieu by George Bellows, Abraham Walkowitz, George Luks, and other artists who were members of, or related to, the so-called Ash Can School. Of all these exhibits, the paintings were the least rewarding: they attested to a certain level of diligent competence, but, in comparison with the offerings in the other media, most of them seemed lifeless, perfunctory. This obviously reflects the limitations of imagination and ability of the painters in the group, but it also has something to do, I think, with the nature of their subject. For most of them, in varying ways, try to see the immigrant milieu as material for aesthetic composition, and they somehow denature the scenes they represent by their own special viewpoints of artistic selectivity: if the East Side can be said to have had a meaning, it was anything but aesthetic.

Precisely for this reason, the one painting in the exhibition that was genuinely moving, Charles Ulrich's "In the Land of Promise: Castle Gardens" (1884), achieves its power not through any originality of technique—it looks like a tired 19th-century reminiscence of Dutch realism—but through the sheer dramatic suggestiveness in the posture of its human figures. In the foreground, we see a pale young woman with a child at the breast, sitting on a bench at the immigrant reception center; the look of profoundly disheartened weariness in the young mother's face is mirrored in the face of a little girl, possibly her daughter, standing just behind her.

Ulrich's painting is in fact quite close in mood and conception to many of the photographs—especially the remarkable ones by Jacob Riis—which were clearly the most impressive aspect of the exhibtion. And what the photographs chiefly reveal, in a variety of striking ways, is that the Lower East Side, for all its turbulence and energy, was obviously not a pretty place and apparently not a very happy one to live in. In this respect, the huge proportions to which some of the photographs were blown up had the effect of making details leap out almost painfully, closing the gap between picture and viewer through a kind of visual coercion. Slums being what they are, one was prepared for the pervasive physical sordidness of these scenes—the grime and clutter, the terrible sense of crowding and enclosure of the tenements, the bleak factory look of the schoolrooms and business places with their walls of bare brick or corrugated iron, the ubiquitous rubble and refuse that give a kind of bombed-out appearance to some of the streets and empty lots. Less expected, certainly, with all one hears about the vibrant life of the old East Side, were the faces of the people in the photographs. The big enlargement of a scene from the immigration bureau (c. 1910), the first picture visible on entering the exhibition, was an apt introduction to the whole range of East Side faces. One sees the immigrants—to judge by

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their features and clothing, more Italians than Jews here—sitting row after row, boxed in by metal railings, with what looks like a docketing tag hanging round the neck or jutting from an outside pocket of each person, the faces, disturbingly alike, marked with suspicion, anxious bewilderment, and, above all, a slack-nerved, hollow-eyed fatigue. The photographer, of course, has caught these people at a particularly trying moment, after an exhausting ocean trip in steerage, just as they are being slowly worked through the screening apparatus of a strange bureaucracy which, for all they know, may turn them back at the gate. It seems likely, moreover, that many of the photographers whose work was exhibited tended to select subjects that would show the elements of pathos in the plight of the immigrant population. Nevertheless, those hurt, scared, immensely weary eyes were repeated too often in too many different circumstances to have been merely the accidental result of rare moments.

THE EAST SIDE, with the desperate scramble of its inhabitants to eke out a living from the strident competition of the pushcarts and the pitiless rush of piece-work in the sweatshops and at home, must in fact have been an exhausting place to stay alive in. Some of the harshness of this existence is reflected in the faces of the children in the photographs, who often seem like shrunken, wizened adults, at times quite Dickensian in their poignancy. All these aspects of the stress and fatigue of life on the East Side are powerfully summed up in a photograph by Jacob Riis of a man preparing for the Sabbath in a Ludlow Street coal-cellar. The very idea of the picture is arresting enough: the braided Sabbath loaf, set in the middle of a grimy oilcloth, with a background of blackened, peeling boards, a kerosene can, a coal shovel, looks somehow humiliated. But the real focus of meaning in the picture is the face of the man wearily sitting at the table: he is the kind of Jew it has long been the fashion to romanticize—a thick black beard and a head of dark curls, hands swollen and calloused with work, he is a sturdy embodiment of the *proster Yid*—but his eyes have the awful glazed look of a fighter about to go down for the count. One hopes the Sabbath will restore him a little to himself.

There were, to be sure, less pathetic aspects to the old East Side, which were represented in the exhibition by the display on the Yiddish theater, by the photographic and documentary evidence of the labor-union movement, by some of the literary and autobiographical materials included in the catalogue. But I have emphasized the effects of grinding poverty both because they emerged from the exhibition most forcefully and because they, above all, have to be confronted in an attempt to make something of this memory. The organizers of the exhibition, it is clear, were most eager to make something of the experience without sentimentalizing or inflating it, but the evaluative statements in the catalogue tended to grow hazy at the crucial points of their argument, thus allowing certain notes of special pleading to insinuate themselves.

The three brief essays included in the catalogue, an introduction by Allon Schoener, assistant director of the museum, and reflections on what the East Side represented by Irving Howe and Milton Hindus, all showed such determination to take a balanced view of the subject that they all applied the same formula of rhetorical balance—one clause against the East Side, one for it; a brace of adjectives on stinking poverty, another set on vitality and idealistic aspiration. But this did not prevent any of the three essays from slipping at moments into vague over-evaluations, as illustrated by this sentence of Milton Hindus, which reflects the most embarrassing consequences of the resolution to interpret dispassionately yet portentously: "The East Side was a great proving ground for Americans, filled with ineffable ecstasies as well as hazards and handicaps, which served, as such things always do, to separate the wheat from the chaff, the men from the boys." The symmetrical balance of good and evil is a little too comfortably neat, and, certainly in the light of the exhibition, "ineffable ecstasies" seems like a rather strenuous exaggeration, serving here more to round out an alliteration than to square off a meaning. The flood of proverbial wisdom, moreover, at the end of the sentence, is symptomatic of a temporary cessation of thought, invoking as it does the famous tautology of popular Darwinism—"we survived, therefore we must have been the fittest for survival." The hint of self-congratulation that creeps into this view of the East Side is one of the real dangers in our potential response as Jews to the whole evocation of our early experience of privation in this country; I would like to return to this danger in commenting, later, on the audience at the Jewish Museum.

IN CONTRAST TO the Hindus piece, Irving Howe's essay, "The Lower East Side: Symbol and Fact," was filled with bright observations, conceived with a broad and subtle awareness of historical complexities. He is marvelously apt in describing the "subculture of *Yiddishkeit*" which he sees as the essence of the East Side world: "It signified a sense of communal discipline and affection. It meant cultural intensity, indeed, cultural ferocity; it placed commitment before manners, vitality before gentility." Howe seems to have intellectuals particularly in mind, and his observation does a good deal to explain the intellectual style of many Jews, himself among them, active in American cultural life today. Now, I don't want to carp at so eloquent an essay, yet it seems to me that, for all its perceptiveness, it is subtly but significantly misleading in one respect. Howe's own mental habitat has been to a large extent ideological, and, in

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joining the effort of the framers of the exhibition to see the East Side as an "idea," he tends to convert into quasi-ideological intention even what was no more than blind circumstance. Thus, he conceives the Lower East Side as "an experiment in collective rootlessness, a brief transcendence over nationhood, . . . a provincial world with universalist values." This description may work for the impassioned Yiddish socialists of the period, or for the Yiddish stage-interpreters of Shakespeare and Ibsen, but "experiment," after all, implies conscious purpose, and I'm not sure whether that can really be stretched to cover any large part of the immigrant masses. My own grandfather, for instance, like so many ordinary Jews at the time, came to America in 1905 to avoid conscription into the Tsar's army (he had already served once) and to escape the threat of future pogroms. What he wanted to do here was to provide for his family and remain a self-respecting, God-fearing Jew, not to build what Howe calls—in an excess of sophistication, I think—"a utopian colony of *Yiddishkeit*." We all have our own grandfathers, of course, but among a million-and-a-half Jewish immigrants in half a century, a great many must have been simple Jews with simple aspirations, and it seems unwise to state the meaning of the total experience in terms of the activity of a few segments of the group, however vocal.

Hindus is patently defensive in his view of the immigrants—complaining, for example, about the "caricatures" of Jewish life in Henry Roth and throwing in Philip Roth for good measure—and Howe, though more critically intelligent, resembles him in trying to recreate the East Side as a model of the passionately committed life. Howe's retrospective vision of immigrant utopianism could usefully be compared with the comments on those same Jews of a contemporary observer, Jacob Riis, in *How the Other Half Lives* (1890):

> Money is their God. Life itself is of little value compared with even the leanest bank account. In no other spot does life wear so intensely bald and materialistic an aspect as in Ludlow Street. Over and over again I have met with instances of these Polish or Russian Jews deliberately starving themselves to the point of physical exhaustion, while working night and day at a tremendous pressure to save a little money.

As a document of social realities, Riis's book is, admittedly, peculiar and not entirely reliable. The same acute social conscience that made his camera an instrument of compassionate portrayal is present in the book, but mingled with an appalling condescension which is compounded of the standard prejudices of the period: every Irishman is a roughneck and a drunkard, every Chinaman has an opium den in the back of his laundry with a white slave-girl, every Jew is a moneygrubber. But if Riis's vision needs to be corrected for the parallax of ethnic bias, it can hardly be discounted; he really went into the back of those laundries, again and again, with camera and pen and paper, just as he really went into the sweatshops and the tenements. The overwhelming fact about the East Side experience for us today is that we got out of it, and the way out was not always, perhaps not even usually, the shining road of self-enlightenment through public schools, lending libraries, and free lectures, which is pointed to with justified pride in the exhibition. The need to escape from the exploitative clutches of an economic system as ruthless as was this country's half a century ago often elicited a matching ruthlessness, not only toward others but toward oneself as well; the "ferocity" that Howe mentions was not always limited to cultural activities. If one is to speak of the heritage of the East Side in terms of the Jewish labor movement, the Yiddish press and theater, the artists, writers, political leaders who grew up in the ghetto, one must also take into account the crasser heritage of the "pants-pressers," as they are sometimes still contemptuously called, who, like their more idealistic brothers, were shaped and tempered by those years on the East Side. It does not require a very long leap of inference to see a connection between the frantic pursuit of the desperately needed dollar by the grandfathers on Ludlow Street and the hideous ostentation with which its buying-power is displayed by their children and grandchildren in Westchester County and Miami Beach.

This brings me to the crucial matter of the people who came to the exhibition and their response to the displays. There was nothing especially crass about the two audiences I had an opportunity to observe—quite the contrary. The one safe generalization that can be made about them is that they were, with rare exceptions, visibly and comfortably affluent Americans. Their dress was generally in good taste, with a tendency to conservative fashionableness enlivened by an occasional op-art coat or mini-skirt; their manner, recognizably Jewish, I suppose, but with little of that quality of "loudness" attributed to Jews by prejudice, and about which some of the children of the immigrants were once uneasy themselves. My second visit to the museum was on a Sunday afternoon, at which time people were queued up all the way around the corner. By the evidence of this large group, a trip to the exhibition was typically a family activity. For the most part, the crowd was made up of middle-aged parents accompanied by children in their early teens or slightly younger; occasionally, one saw three generations, the parents and children together with a whitehaired grandmother (for some reason, grandfathers were much scarcer) in an expensive knit suit that was worlds away from the drab skirts and blouses of a Delancey Street girlhood.

WHAT COULD THE exhibition have meant to these people? The answer to this has to be a compli-

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cated one, for it seems likely that the displays must have roused in many, as they did in me, mixed feelings, not very easy to articulate. I do not think that the primary sense of the East Side which came across to the audience was of a "creative crucible" or a "utopian colony," as the contributors to the catalogue imagine it. For most of the parents, and for all of the grandparents, the exhibition would have been first of all an evocation of poignant personal memories, and the comments I overheard as I walked around tended strongly to corroborate this supposition.

Such recollection for the sake of recollection seems to me a legitimate, even an important, kind of experience. We Jews are proverbially a remembering people, which is in some ways a mixed blessing, but a blessing nevertheless. The particular forms of human life are so fragile and ephemeral that our only way not to concede their utter insignificance in the vast rush of time is to cling through image and word and artifact to the look and feel of the lives we led before. If this urgency of memory lays claim on those who have actually undergone the experience, it has a different imperative, possibly a greater one, for those who come after. When I was born, my mother's family had been living away from the East Side for more than fifteen years, and both my grandparents were already dead. Much of the exhibition moved me because I could glimpse in it a world I had been hearing about since childhood which I was never able to know, but the strongest appeal to my own imagination was of a general, not a personal, nature, in the simple revelation of things irrevocably past, in seeing under those kerchiefs and derbies and visored caps young faces that are now old and wrinkled, or gone from the world. It is a mistake, I think—almost, a mistake with propagandistic overtones—to reduce this experience of memory to a "meaning," to translate a large complex of lived history into an idea.

MOST OF THE parents I overheard at the exhibition were engaged in trying to share their sense of personal recollection with their children. The remarks elicited from them by the various photographs were what one would expect: "My father used to work in a place like that," "See, your great-grandmother looked just like that," and so forth. For a twelve-year-old, the exhibition must have been something like a guided tour of the early Middle Ages. "See, darling," I heard one mother tell her young daughter, pointing to a picture of dozens and dozens of laden clotheslines strung out of tenement windows, "that was in the days before there were electric dryers." All this might conceivably bewilder a child, but it could be the kind of bewilderment which is the beginning of learning. What should be noted is that if the experience of the East Side represents complete otherness for the children, it is almost equally that for the parents, too.

To any group of prosperous, second-generation American Jews at this point in time, the East Side, above all, is that which they emphatically no longer are. One feels the force of this at the very beginning of the introduction to the catalogue. "Life was a panorama," Allon Schoener writes, dutifully balancing seven negative nouns with four positive ones, "of hardship, misery, poverty, crowding, filth, uncertainty, alienation, aspiration, joy, love, and devotion." Life in those days, that is to say, had all the qualities, good and bad, manifestly absent from our own lives, which in their urban and suburban uniformity don't even seem very panoramic any more.

The contemplation of the otherness of one's own past clearly has its fascinations, but it has its moral perils as well. It can lead to a futile longing for that which is no longer attainable and which, were it attainable, might prove to be less desirable than it seems. The past may legitimately be used as an instructive model of cultural alternatives, and this is pretty much what Irving Howe tries to make of it. But it is easy to be mesmerized by a mirage of the past, in this case, moreover, a past that, by its nature, can give us only limited help in learning how to cope with the difficulties of our own historical situation. Perhaps a more serious danger, however, in recalling our immigrant experience now is that self-congratulatory attitude which I mentioned earlier; implicit for some in the contemplation of past hardships is a sense of complacent satisfaction in having climbed so far above all that. The one disturbing thing I heard at the Jewish Museum was an exchange between two middle-aged men. Standing before a rear-view photograph of a row of tenements, they were moved to comment in tones of the deepest self-righteousness about the differences between the ghettos of past and present. That most of those people "pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps" was the not-unexpected conclusion. ("It is a cruel jest," Martin Luther King recently observed to a mixed audience in Atlanta, "to say to a bootless man, 'lift yourself up by your own bootstraps.' ")

This argument, which many of us have encountered at one time or another in a debate over school integration or rent subsidies, hardly needs refuting: the obstacles confronting the Negro in 1966 are conspicuously different from those faced by the Jew in 1916, for whom a decent life was still feasible without basic changes in the general distribution of wealth and power. There is harsh irony in the fact that the experience of poverty should provide Jews the excuse for a deficiency in human sympathy and social imagination, especially when we recall how in the Bible the memory of former suffering is repeatedly invoked in order to awaken social conscience—"You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

The Bible is particularly relevant here because

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its own special stress on historical experience raises fundamental questions about what we ought to do with our past. The biblical writers, as far as I can see, are almost always didactic in their use of the past, and for that reason they are sometimes tendentious as well. Since our own point of departure in confronting history can only be intellectual honesty, unsupported by any certainty of faith in a divine plan, we obviously cannot allow ourselves to reconstruct our history tendentiously, but we ought to note that the Bible typically chooses its emphases from the past in order to make more rigorous demands on the present, not, as we may be tempted to do, in order to bolster collective egos. The biblical record also suggests that if we no longer can afford to simplify history, we can afford even less merely to forget it: the Jews, like other peoples, though more intently than most, have through the ages founded their sense of identity on a firm awareness of the group's previous experience, and that can hardly be abandoned if we are to remain Jews. The exhibition at the Jewish Museum dramatically illustrated how a variety of media, artfully employed, can help to foster such historical awareness; but it also pointed up the dangers in attempting to carve shapely meanings out of the past, against the tough and crooked grain of the past itself.

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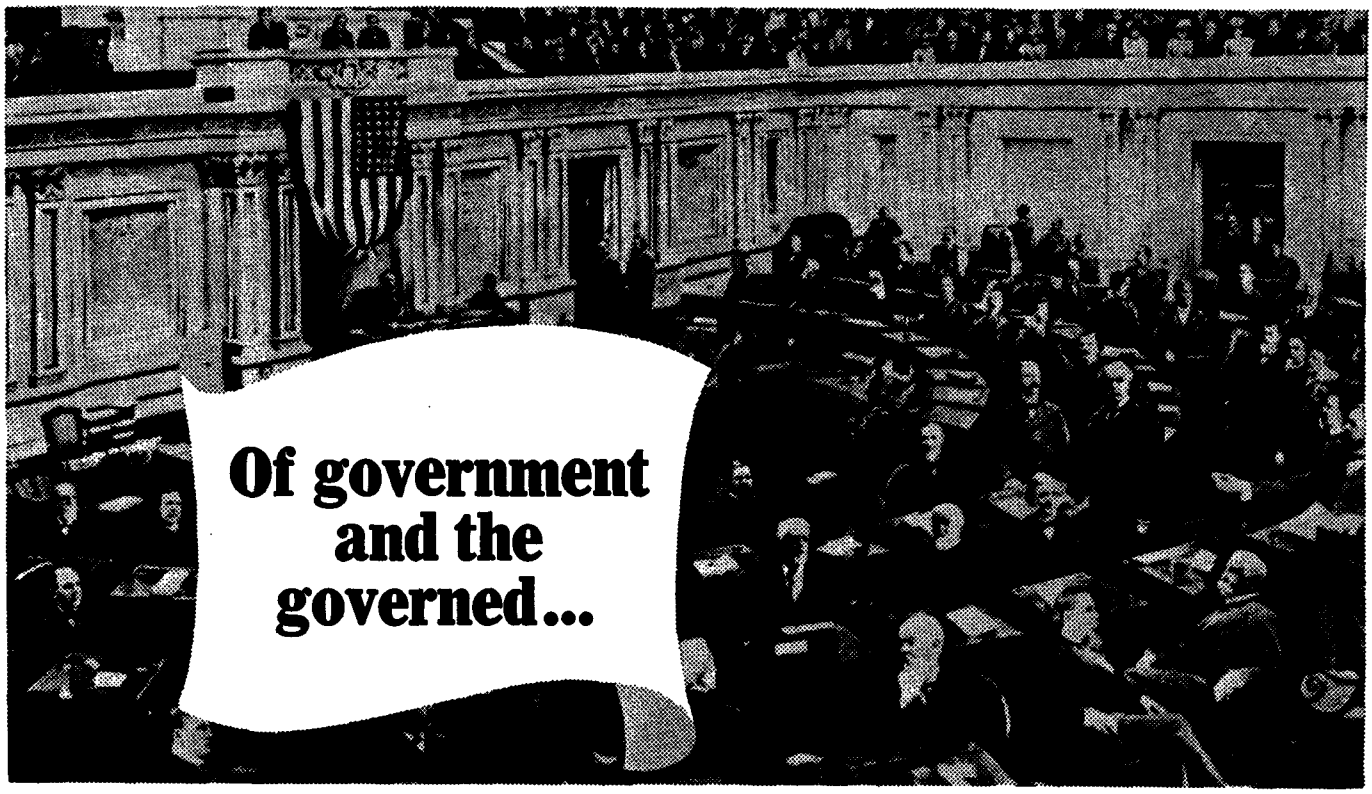

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LESLIE FIEDLER'S FICTIONS

Robert Gorham Davis

PART OF THE scandal of Leslie Fiedler's fiction is the fact that there is so much of it. We could take, many years ago, the indignities of "Nude Croquet," even though we doubted if what we saw naked there was Truth itself. Certainly we thought, as Eliot did of *Finnegans Wake,* that one "Nude Croquet" was quite enough. But then came the novel, *The Second Stone,* with a hero as relentlessly bemused by the foulness of his own body as ever Swift was by Celia's. Now, as the climax to "The Last WASP in the World," one of the three stories in his new collection,* a bearded aging drunken poet is ritually undressed by his wife and two long-term mistresses. He is the right number of years older than the poet of the early story, "Pull Down Vanity!," and that much randier. We know with a familiar sinking of the spirits what proud display the giggling ladies will behold when the last garment is flung off.

In an early story, "The Fear of Innocence," we could take it when the teller left for others to discover the "abominable remnants" of a woman's unloved body. We were overpersuaded, perhaps, by the tenderness beyond innocence which he allegedly carried from the stinking door. In *The Second Stone* it was the hero's own mother, two days dead, whose corpse the super stumbled over. Her son had long since ceased answering her pathetic letters. In the novel, *Back to China,* international melodramatics lay behind the double deception by which the aging body of a wife twenty years unloved was finally made pregnant. And now in one of the new stories, "The First Spade in the West," the two themes combine. A Negro kills with unloving sex a woman older and uglier than any of these, and places her corpse for others to discover in circumstances that turn the tale into a grotesque ethnic fantasy. Beside her body is put—again after a ritual undressing—the body of a sleeping drunk.

So much fiction of such a character can hardly be dismissed as the incidental by-product of a dominantly critical career. Four volumes of fiction confront four volumes of criticism. They treat as wittily the same themes as the criticism, and their energy and obsessiveness obviously rise from deep personal needs. They ask to be judged by the purposes which Fiedler defined for his criticism in the preface to *An End to Innocence*: to tell what "seems to me the truth about my world and myself as a liberal, intellectual, writer, American and Jew" and to register "through my particular sensibility the plight of a whole group."

Gauged by such standards, the fiction is appalling; it hurts. And its inferiority to the criticism is not due to absence of talent. Whole early stories like "The Stain" and "The Dancing of Reb Hershl with the Withered Hand" —notably unautobiographical stories—show genuine imagination; and imagination, wit, and eloquence flash in separate phrases or observations throughout the work.

The offensiveness in Fiedler's fiction—the reductiveness, the coprophilia, the cruel irresponsibility of the wit, the intimacy of the lechery, the poverty of moral invention—seems a positive, taunting expression of the author's own personality. It dares us to use the fiction against the critic and against the criticism, to exclaim like squares: "How can a university professor of literature, guide to the young, transmitter of our cultural heritage, devote himself so insistently to such subjects, with such abandonment and glee? How dare the tastes there expressed be used to judge men like Emerson and Hawthorne, indeed the whole American imaginative tradition?"

To ask such questions is to fall —perhaps willingly—into a trap which Fiedler has set for us. He loves provocation and risks. His fiction is designed to goad us into the grave New Critical error of identifying characters with their author, of assuming that their tastes and proclivities are also his. We have to struggle to stay pure critically even if a whole series of characters show these proclivities with mounting passion. Fiedler is demonstrating by example that the fiction writer has the warrant to assume any masks he pleases, even if the masks have graying beards the same shape as his own and give the same brilliant lectures at conferences. His criticism is to be judged as something quite apart. "Trust the criticism, not the critic." It speaks with its own authority, is informed, sensitive to the social and even spiritual requiredness of specific changes in literary modes.

But if we defy the two Fiedlers and insist on seeing each through the other, something happens, especially to the criticism. We realize more clearly what it exaggerates, what it leaves out, and what in it is mere rhetoric.

Most critic-creators write criticism that defends their particular kind of creativity either directly or through explication of parallel phenomena in other writers. With Fiedler it is the other way around. In his fiction the preoccupations of his criticism get exaggerated and misapplied. All Fiedler's writing is obsessed by lies, duplicity, false role-playing. His fiction invents characters whom he and the other characters can readily unmask. But when this happens nothing is left, which is not all what happened when he unmasked *Moby Dick, Huckleberry Finn* and *The Scarlet Letter.* Those works emerged more mysterious and powerful

* *The Last Jew in America,* Stein and Day, 191 pp., $4.95.

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than before. Truly conceived, good fiction cannot be unmasked, because it *is* the mask. If good fiction is a lie, it is a life-enhancing, value-creating, direction-pointing lie, a lie that can be interpreted but not exposed. When the lies and masks of Fiedler's characters are taken away from them, they are left in shivering nakedness. We get not truth but anguish.

THE preoccupation with lying has a political source. The earliest volume of criticism, *An End to Innocence*, begins with three essays on the lies respectively of Alger Hiss, the Rosenbergs, and Senator McCarthy. McCarthy's lying was the conventional lying of corrupt politicians and lawyers, who have no interest in truth as such. They care only about what can win or lose a case or an election. The lying of Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs was ideological or dialectic, and resulted from a decisive change in the policies of international Communism, around 1935. Before that, in the Leninist Third Period, Communists proudly proclaimed their revolutionary purpose, even seeking arrests in order to use the courtroom as a forum. Increasingly after the Popular Front period they lied about their affiliations and aims. The monstrous Russian show trials forced former leading Communists to liquidate themselves through lies.

For Fiedler, the Rosenbergs denied their humanity by going to their deaths as fakes, as "symbolic Rosenbergs" pretending to be pious Jews and typical sports-loving Americans rather than Communists. He felt that in their letters "not only the Marxist dream of social justice but the very possibilities of any heroism and martyrdom are being blasphemed." His essay tried to restore reality to the Rosenbergs. Our duty, after confronting and understanding the profound ambiguities in any social action, is "to treat as persons, as real human beings, those who most blasphemously deny their own humanity."

Fiedler carried into his interpretation of literature this preoccupation with duplicity, with lying, with false role playing. Here D. H. Lawrence was an influence, as he was on the "escaped cock" phallicism of some of Fiedler's fiction. Talking in *Studies in Classic American Literature* of the moralism of Hawthorne, Poe, Longfellow, Emerson, and Melville, Lawrence writes: "Hence the duplicity which is the fatal flaw in them: most fatal in the most perfect American work of art, *The Scarlet Letter.*" In *Love and Death in the American Novel*, Fiedler says: "Duplicity is the most notable, perhaps the essential characteristic of the greatest American novelist; and surely the most duplicitous of all is Mark Twain. . . ." Hawthorne is also a "master of duplicity," and so is Melville in *Moby Dick*. In his most recent book of criticism, *Waiting for the End*, the algebra of false role-playing has become dizzyingly complex: "If the frontiersman was a mock Indian, and the Western movie star a mock frontiersman, what is Hemingway but the white Indian twice removed, out of whose union with the imaginary bad Negro, the black rapist of the *Birth of a Nation* recast as a hero, the hipster, or at least Mailer's version of the hipster, has been born?"

But when Fiedler looks for—or tries to imagine—the person behind the role who is more real than the role, he becomes abstract, rhetorical, unconvincing, as he does at the end of the early essay, "Images of Walt Whitman." There Fiedler defines brilliantly the partial or false images which others made of Whitman, for their various purposes. But when he confronts Whitman's own conscious role-playing, the poet's attitude toward his own artistic persona, the argument grows confusingly involved.

Whitman is the "slyest of artificers," the artificer of sincerity, winking at us "from behind his most portentous statements." The duplicity in him "staggers us," a peculiarly American duplicity arising from "our belief that what we dream rather than what we are is our essential truth." But then Fiedler says that this dream was not of Whitman's choosing, that Europeans framed for him "the lie in which we have been catching him out, the image of America in which we no longer believe." Yet mysteriously, unspeakably behind Whitman's posturing, his false rhetoric, and the grand lie imposed on him, "the poetry remains and the poet—anonymous in the end as they were in the beginning."

Lies, ambiguities, confusions of identity, and yet behind them poetry and the essential self: The first three proliferate in the fiction; the last two give difficulty. Fiedler loves in his fiction to catch characters out, to involve them in lies which can be exposed. The lie which is a dream, which is poetry, is rare, and the essential self hardly appears at all except as despair, or a positive nothingness.

The very first story, "The Teeth," in his first book of fiction, *Pull Down Vanity*, points the way, though it is more moralistic than those that come after. A beginning writer is enroute to a rendezvous with three young women whom he has never met and who admired his essay in a magazine called, inevitably, *The Mask*. In a troubling incident he fakes a limp that would suggest a war wound; before meeting the young women (who turn out to be very unattractive—one has hair like fur between her breasts) he puts on some false teeth from a joke shop, and—moved to make himself equally repulsive morally—explains the incident of the limp as deliberate mockery of a crippled boy. Before departing, without tasting the food they have lovingly prepared, he cries out in reference to the intolerable heat of that summer evening, "Everything else is a lie." At the Hawthornesque end of the story he dreams that the teeth have become irremovable.

Elsewhere, false teeth are used more conventionally for an artifice which leaves a gaping emptiness when removed, as the many lies in Fiedler's stories ordinarily do. The teller of "An Expense of Spirit" keeps on his desk as "a trophy and a warning, an unflagging joke," a denture which another character had lost in a humiliating fall that was at once physical and spiritual, like the fall of the critic, Marvin, at the end of "Nude Croquet."

In the title story, "Pull Down Vanity!," the narrator, after gratu-

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itously claiming to have seven children (he has none), gives two different lying explanations for the impotence he suffers with a young Gentile married woman who loves him passionately for his eloquence, his poetry, his Jewishness. As his final lie he seizes mystically on race: "It's just that I've never slept with a Gentile girl before . . . something in the blood—refused, refused!"

In the novel, *Back to China*, Baro Finkelstone responds to his war experiences by having himself "tied-off," made sterile. The circumstances are implausible but they characteristically join together an abstract concern with guilt and Fiedler's very specific orchidic preoccupation indicated, among other things, by the frequency with which the word "stone," capitalized and uncapitalized, appears in his fiction. Baro's unadmitted sterility ruins his marriage; his wife feels guilty and unfulfilled at not giving birth. Before the war, everything had been gay. "He used always to play at shifting identities just after they were married—coming through the door in comic hats or false noses or wax teeth, trying on a score of stage dialects, to set Susannah laughing until she cried, Who is the real Baro Finkelstone?"

Confusion of identity dominates the earlier novel, *The Second Stone*. The interchangeable twins pattern, and some of the names (Clem and Mark), come from Mark Twain. Since the novel is about Americans in Italy, the name Hilda and the contrast of dark and light in females are borrowed from Hawthorne's *Marble Faun*. Mark and Clem were inseparable in youth. "Half the time we hardly knew who we were or where, and when we were sick we were sick all over each other."

Clem, a Gentile, gone sterile as a writer, lingers in Rome after his dark Jewish wife, Selma, and their child have returned to America. Selma "smacked of jungle odors, the effluvia of great cats, or, sometimes, of the tidal flats, the shallow edges of the sea where life began in squalor and in stink." He is having a violent affair with Mark's blond Gentile pregnant wife, Hilda, while Mark stages an international conference on love, financed by a contraceptive manufacturer, "the Gutson Borglum of the uro-genital tract." He awaits Martin Buber, a kind of Godot, as main speaker. Hilda needs to know whether Clem really wrote a poem published under Mark's name which made her decide to marry Mark. Clem needs to know whether Hilda is lying to him in attributing the conception of her child to a single act of sex with a man whom she then knowingly let commit suicide. "She surely lied, Clem knew, and so the son of that dead surely father surely was the son of lies, the unborn nameless son of namelessness." In its melodramatic circumstances, this duplicitous insemination is very like the duplicitous insemination in *Back to China*.

The wit of *The Second Stone*—and some of it is very funny—is directed at the fakery and hypocrisy of the conference, held under U.S. government auspices. This is a world which Fiedler knows very well, but he peoples it with outrageous characters who are gratuitously and complicatedly offensive in the manner of the early story, "The Teeth."

For the grossness of much of the detail—a grossness expressed ingeniously and in vivid, vigorous language—Fiedler obviously feels that he has symbolic warrant. In *Waiting for the End*, talking of a "special Jewish vulgarity," he says the Semite—Jew or Arab—"stands in dung up to his eyes, but his brow touches the heavens. And where else is there to stand but on dung in a world buried beneath the privileged excretions of the mass media . . .?"

In Fiedler's fiction there is much dung, human and animal, but little heaven. "Crap" or one of its synonyms is the usual response of the characters to whatever their fellow characters are saying, whether earnestly or hypocritically. To enforce the metaphor, there is plenty of the real stuff lying around, evident to eye and nose. This is especially so in *The Second Stone*, where the toilet is nearly as much the stage as the bed. Two favorite symbols combine when Clem sees the Roman Coliseum as "old dentures in a field of goat droppings."

In one toilet scene, Clem acknowledges "the contempt which underlay the grossness of his behavior." Only in an early story, "Fear of Innocence," does Fiedler go to the roots of this attitude. "We began by revenging on the ordered world its exclusion of ourselves, but we come to love the revenge for its own sake; what exposed, demeaned, desecrated, we need as evidence for what we had guessed by its rejection of us, the world's unworthiness." The "we" are the same kind of twins as the Stones of the later novel. The narrator observes of his *alter ego* in youth: "He lied out of that dark, trivial compulsion which drove him always to demean his motives, to seem rather thoroughly foul than a little the fool." In later works, the fool and the foul, or the comic and the foul, combine as part of a conscious literary purpose. In *Love and Death*, Fiedler says that most of the followers of Faulkner in Southern fiction have lost "the grossness, the sheer dirtiness, the farce and howling burlesque, all that keeps Faulkner from ever seeming precious."

Vomit joins "crap" as a bodily symbol of rejection. It appears in the first sentence of *The Second Stone* and at a central point in *Back to China* when Baro seeks transcendence ("heaven") in an Indian peyote ceremonial but vomits up all the peyote into one of the large empty cans from the supermarket that litter the floor. They are much needed: "It had appeared as if the aqueous two-thirds of every living body there had sought to escape in sweat, saliva, and urine."

Human excretions are the residue of food and drink after they have been enjoyed and used healthily by the living body. They come at the end of a creative and sustaining process. But Fiedler treats them as if they were the end in the sense of being the purpose, the summing-up. For his imagination, wine is visualized as urine-to-be, even before it enters the body. Characters rarely take pleasure in food as such. On the few occasions when food is fresh and noticed, there is something sinister about

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it: A schoolteacher in "The Fear of Innocence" serves the boys "meat cut from the dark genital regions of beasts not slaughtered by pious Jews." Usually the emphasis is cloacal or regurgitative, on what is offensive and to be rejected. What holds for food and drink, literally, holds for human bodies and thoughts symbolically.

Never in the stories do we find characters straightforwardly discussing tenable ideas as Fiedler does in his own essays and public lectures, nor do we have the sense that such ideas even exist. When ideas are used dramatically, it is because they can be made to seem false, fake, hypocritical. They are something to be disposed of—in other words, crap. The grand climax of *The Second Stone* is a concentrated version of Huxley's *Point Counterpoint*. Ideas about love and creativity—including some expressed seriously in Fiedler's criticism—are played off against each other satirically until no meaning is left. Ideas are instruments in role-playing. They are formulations designed as strategy to produce the most effect on a particular occasion, smart moves in the game of oneupmanship in colloquia and avant-garde magazines.

Along with ideas, social and ethnic status is primarily interesting as chosen or enforced role-playing. As in his criticism, where he makes so much of the relationship of Huck and Jim, Ishmael and Queequeg, Natty Bumppo and Chingachook, Fiedler loves to weave intricate ethnic patterns, using principally Jews, Negroes, Wasps, Indians, Japanese, and homosexuals (whom he makes, in many ways, more of a special breed than the rest). They hate or admire each other, are sexually attracted to each other, imitate or pretend to be each other, or in mysteries of origin do not know really what they are. Though they suffer from their status, they learn to use it too, and in using it to exaggerate and fake it and destroy any spiritual support it might give them. This provokes attack from others and lets Fiedler, with his sure sense of where the power of provocation lies, play freely and mockingly with racial stereotypes and epithets: "yid," "jig," "jungle bunny," used by inwardly desperate people against other desperate people. "The First Spade in the West," set in Lewis and Clark City, ends with a grand funeral which is also the funeral of whatever realities lay behind the Western frontier myth, faked ever since the days of Buffalo Bill. Two thousand people "sing their hearts out" in a banal hymn to the state written by a broken-down vaudevillian from Hoboken. Around the coffin, dressed as cowpokes, wearing holsters with no guns in them, stands an honor guard consisting of "a beatnik from the East, a little sheeny with a shoe-clerk's moustache, a big fat queer who'd struck it rich, and a spade."

Most frequently dramatized is the loss of a sustaining faith behind Jewish identity. In his early story, "The Dancing of Reb Hershl with the Withered Hand," the faith is still alive for imaginative and poetic purposes. The lie as myth is life-giving. Though Fiedler in that story deliberately deals with the most terrible and problematic materials, a Christian child with his throat cut, the spoliation by the Israelites of their spoilers, the look is well upward from the dung toward some kind of heaven.

IN "The Last Jew In America," (the title story and the best in the new collection) the dying faith behind identity cannot be revived. Here Fiedler treats his characters sympathetically, unmockingly, and with a novelist's mastery of detail. The material could not be invented. It had to be observed and remembered, and it has become convincingly part of each character's appropriate awareness. At one time Louis Himmelfarb, Jacob Moskowitz, and Max Shultheis were the only Jews in a Far Western city. Their differing temperaments made the relationship a strained one. Moskowitz, a former Communist, animal man in the university biology department, and Shultheis, an aggressively successful business man, are both unbelievers. Himmelfarb had been accustomed to bully a new generation of "reluctant not-quite-Jews of the community into desultory Seders and Purim celebrations. 'For the children,' he had invariably explained to the bored planning groups. . . ."

Now Himmelfarb is dying in the Catholic hospital at the time of Yom Kippur, and Moskowitz is trying to get together a *minyan* in the hospital room for *Kol Nidre*. Shultheis is violently opposed, but Moskowitz persists, partly out of regard for Himmelfarb, partly because he needs to preserve his own sense of being a Jew. After initial resistance, enough Jews come from the academic community to make the ceremony possible. The *Kol Nidre* is sung, but the occasion is a failure. Those around the bed "fingered the pages of their prayer books vaguely, in half-hearted search of the right place; or reached out to embrace their squirming sons in an act of reassurance in which neither party believed. . . ." An official of the university, who had not before been revealed as a Jew except by the second *d* in his name, Miles Standdish, gets so wrought up that he vomits.

Afterward, Jacob Moscowitz considers dispiritedly the Jewish books and paraphernalia in his living room, the pitiful "jetsam left by the ebbing of a great faith, the death of a heroic people" and compares them with his few remaining Marxist books from the 30's, "equally trivial remnants of another chosen people, another religion that had shaken the world and moved for three, four, five decades his own hungry heart." The concluding incident shows that the businessman was not as immune to what was going on as he thought, but his response is a mere superstitious reflex, something in the blood, without substance or direction.

THE LOSS of the two faiths of the bookshelves caused the "plight of a whole group" for which Fiedler made himself spokesman in the preface to *An End of Innocence*. Nothing has replaced them. The only surviving cult in Fiedler's fiction is Bacchic priapism. His heroic *alter egos* are as ithyphallic as the bearded satyrs on Greek vases. At the end of *The Second Stone*,

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Clem begins to crow like "the cock his father had kept in their backyard, chiefly to plague their Jewish neighbors." At the end of "Pull Down Vanity!," the teller says that "desire flowed back into me, idiotically, uncomfortably, to the crowing of the first cocks; and I hobbled down the street, pointing my own way home. . . ." But the cult has no ritual, except drunken undressing, no myths, no beauty, no poetry, not even that of the body, except for the scene in which Clem Stone makes love to Hilda while she is asleep.

The phallus is not, so to speak, its own end. It has to symbolize dumbly, achingly, all the beauty, imagination, sense of continuing history and of the "essential self" that give strength to the works of others whom Fiedler criticizes, but which cannot exist in his own because of his confusion of fiction with masks that must be unmasked and lies that must be exposed. There is no release in phallicism or from phallicism—only a frozen stasis. So his last Wasp realized (a Wasp with the unwasplike name of "Hazelbaker") when, at a particularly inappropriate moment, his "turgid sex" swelled once more. This was "no part of his essential body, the real Vincent Hazelbaker —only a spear, a shaft, a stake that transfixed him, an iron rod that pinned him to the sunless rock which was also he."

The part is speechless as he, the whole, now becomes speechless, and yet without that rod he is nothing. Uncovering, discovery, is not recovery, but a glimpse into the void. The story ends as it ends for most of these poets, these fantastically articulate masters of language, in sheer unsymbolizable anguish, a last bleak cry of pain and terror. It is as if the body, emotions, and sensibilities, given so little satisfaction, were crying out in frustrated anger against the mind which had betrayed them.

ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS, *the well-known literary critic, is professor of English at Columbia. He has recently written on Dos Passos and C. P. Snow, and is currently at work on a book about language.*

* * *

A FAREWELL TO TV

Neil Compton

TO BE THE "regular television critic" even of a magazine like COMMENTARY is surely to occupy an excessively modest position in the vast hierarchy of American criticism. The job offers little gratification to the ego. On one hand, boredom induced by the Brobdingnagian triviality of what has to be watched, and nervousness in case friends drop in and catch one in front of *Green Acres* or *I Dream of Jeannie*; on the other, an inhibiting awareness of the folly of sweeping condemnation. Cultural history abounds in cautionary examples of reactionary fastidiousness: the talker, Socrates, distrusted writing, aristocratic Elizabethan poets disdained print, genteel Victorian critics disparaged the vulgarian Dickens, and movies which were once ignored even by newspaper reviewers are now reverently studied at film society showings.

Come to think of it, even the *Beverly Hillbillies* doesn't seem so vapid a show as it did three seasons ago. For all its corniness and its narcissistic appeal to rural sillybillies, the program reflects a genuine confrontation in contemporary American society—as anyone will have to agree who saw Buddy Ebsen (who plays Jed Clampett) campaigning for Ronald Reagan. James Aubrey, the malign genius who brought the *Hillbillies* and other popular classics to the living-room screen, wrought more finely than he knew.

The professional uneasiness I have described is usually exacerbated each season by the public's enthusiastic appetite for just those programs most thoroughly damned by the critics. This year, however, things are different. Everyone—critics and adult viewers alike—seems united in indifference to the new shows unveiled in September. According to a survey conducted by the Home Testing Institute, not one new program is among the twenty favorites of viewers over fifty years of age, and only three have made the grade with those aged from thirty-five to forty-nine. Even more significantly, five out of six top choices of the eighteen to thirty-four age group (cream of the ratings crop) are the five weekly network movies. Presumably, if there were six or seven regular movie series a week, they would displace even more top-ranking television shows.

As though to confirm the not-very-profound conclusion of my last column that TV is increasingly designed for adolescents (COMMENTARY, October 1966), it turns out that only those under eighteen seem happy about the new season: the teen-agers' top twenty favorites include sixteen new shows. Children from six to eleven are only slightly less enthusiastic. But adults still apparently maintain some control over the family set. Nielsen ratings for the new entries are generally low this year. As I write, a high proportion of new shows is scheduled to disappear prematurely from the networks.

Of course, even mediocrity has its degrees. There are at least two competently produced new adventure series—*Mission: Impossible* (CBS), a sort of American equivalent to *Secret Agent* with a whole racially and sexually integrated team to do what Patrick McGoohan used to manage on his own; and *Jericho* (also CBS), about a not-unsimilar crew of World War II underground agents. (On television, the cult of personality appears to be giving way to collective leadership.) Among comedies, only *The Monkees* (NBC) seems remotely worth the trouble and expense of production: though it is an outrageous steal from the Beatles and their two movies, this series about a teen-age rock'n'roll group started out by being engagingly highspirited, full of slapstick comedy, puns (verbal and visual), trick camera work, and mad chases. (Later episodes have fallen off sharply in wit and verve.) None of these shows aims to do more than help pass the time pleasantly, but they do that adequately enough.

The two liveliest moments of the week are provided by holdovers from last season, *Get Smart* (NBC) and *Jackie Gleason* (CBS). Buck Henry and Mel Brooks, the creators of *Smart*, continue to extract an incredible proportion of pay-dirt from the narrow lode of the spy spoof. Recent episodes have

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extended the range a little to include parodies of pre-Fleming classics; one of the best carried viewers back over the years to *Casablanca*, with Don Addams as a bungling Bogart and Barbara Feldon (in a blonde wig) as a slinky, husky-voiced *chanteuse*.

Smart is the only spy series, comic or serious, that ever risks spicing its fantasy with a dash of moral realism. A characteristic little shock came at the end of an adventure in which Smart blew up an enemy agent with an explosive cigarette. When his faithful companion looked depressed and wondered whether Control was not as bad as KAOS, Smart retorted, "What's the matter with you, 99? We *have* to shoot and kill and destroy: we represent everything that's wholesome and good in the world."

Gleason has revivified his sagging show with a musical revival of *The Honeymooners*, which brings back Art Carney, but not, alas, Audrey Meadows. The two old pros are still perfect foils for one another (almost, but not quite, in the Laurel and Hardy class), and every episode has its funny moments, but those who remember the social and psychological realism of the great original series (1954-6) will hardly be satisfied by this glossy and emasculated version, which has the Kramden and Norton families on an improbably lavish tour of Europe. The old *Honeymooners* was produced with an economy and an austerity unusual for television. Almost everything took place in the Kramdens' claustrophobic, shabby, and unforgettable tenement apartment—a setting which inspired both writers and actors at times to carry the action beyond comedy. The difference between the old and the new is the difference between New York, where the original series was produced, and Miami, where Gleason now makes his headquarters.

Interspersed with episodes of *The Honeymooners*, Gleason occasionally presents special features. One of the best of these was "The Politician" (broadcast September 24), a musical play with Gleason and Carney as a mayor and his campaign manager ("I've been your mayor for twenty years—and I can truthfully say that it's been a rich experience.") This was an uproariously successful expression of nostalgia for the good old-fashioned type of municipal corruption.

LONG BEFORE THE debut of ABC's prestige series, *Stage '67*, I had conceived an irrational (and somewhat masochistic) hope that it would be a flop. The paeans of anticipatory self-congratulation far exceeded even the liberal limits which the broadcasting industry usually allows itself. (Is there a more disgustingly fulsome rhetorical genre than a speech by a network president or vice-president?) However, the series got off to a good start with an amusing, if inconsequential, play by Murray Schisgal, *The Love Song of Barney Kempinski* (September 14). This exercise in pop surrealism—a sort of vestpocket Manhattan *Ulysses*—starred Alan Arkin as a brash and engaging proletarian eccentric, and the city of New York as his one true love. In the approved contemporary fashion, the production had a mad, heightened, and improvised quality; it was full of witty and learned allusions to new wave films and the theater of the absurd. Apart from the rather shocking spectacle of Sir John Gielgud playing a drunk, and the vignette of a pair of gargantuan adulterers indulging in illicit mutual gormandizing (between mouthfuls: "Does your husband know about us?" "Yes. I've gained twelve pounds this month."), the funniest episode was perhaps Arkin's violent and singleminded attempt to extract a tip from a totally impassive Buddhist, deep in a meditative trance. If it were judged as a movie, *Barney Kempinski* would probably elicit little more than mild approval; as a contribution to prime-time network television, I thought it exciting and, perhaps, even revolutionary.

But subsequent weeks of *Stage '67* soon demonstrated that there was no real thaw in the ABC Kremlin. *Dare I Weep, Dare I Mourn* (September 21) looked promising—a teleplay by Stanley Mann from a story by John Le Carré, directed by Ted Kotcheff, and featuring James Mason and Hugh Griffith. But it turned out to be no more than a sort of competently warmed-over *Spy Who Came In*, hastily brought to a conclusion, in the nick of fifty-three minutes, by an O. Henry ending. As the season went on, even competence seemed to be beyond the reach of those producing this "new and unique experience in television viewing." *Where It's At* (September 28) was a rather pathetic attempt at a far-out variety show, featuring an amiable nonentity called Dick Cavett; *Olympus 7000* (October 5) will probably rival *The Canterville Ghost* (November 2) as the worst television musical of the year; Jack Paar on *The Kennedy Wit* (a typically new and daring program idea) was like Jack Paar on the Kennedy wit; *The People Trap* (November 9), a play about a future in which the USA has become so crowded that only twenty acres in Yosemite National Park remain unoccupied, was chiefly notable for Jackie Robinson's remark in a cameo appearance as a television announcer: "Older viewers will perhaps remember automobiles." All in all, the odds are that older viewers will not long remember *Stage '67*.

THIS IS THE last survey of American television that I shall be contributing to COMMENTARY. There has been a certain piquancy to my situation as a Canadian observer eavesdropping on the networks from a situation North of the border. However, there have also been disadvantages arising out of my dependence upon three Northeastern rural outlets. I have missed not only many excellent programs of the commercial networks which local stations did not choose to carry, but also the entire output of the National Educational Television system which, with all its shortcomings, seems to be the only real hope for responsible broadcasting in the United States.

With the partial exception of the French Canadians, the audience for popular television entertainment is continental rather than national in scope. When I began systematic viewing in preparation for this job, I encountered many programs of which I had happily been ignorant; but Canadian stations had for years been broadcasting a catholic selection of the best

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and the worst American programs and there were not many real surprises. Few American shows sink to the depths of Canadian television at its amateurish worst, and even fewer light Canadian programs come close to rivaling the best American ones; but producers on both sides of the border seem to think in terms of the same program categories, and the list of Canada's ten top-rated favorites is not usually very different from its American counterpart. For these reasons, a casual viewer might be forgiven for concluding that the differences between the two traditions amount to no more than minor regional variations.

However, this near unanimity of taste in entertainment only serves to emphasize the striking contrast between American and Canadian attitudes to programming in the field of news and public affairs. This was my first strong impression when I began this stint as a television critic; and one of the pleasanter aspects of giving the job up is the thought that I shall never again have to immerse myself in the stiflingly conformist world of the U.S. network news services.

This is an absurd situation because, like most Canadians, I am heavily dependent upon the American intellectual community both for ideas and information. No country in the world rivals the U.S. in the brilliance of her journalists or the range and quality of journals of opinion. The magazines which I read most avidly are almost all American; and Americans make many of the most impressive and intelligent contributions to Canadian television programs in the fields of both public affairs and the arts. Yet, except for the odd hour on a Sunday morning, one would never guess that all this intellectual energy and talent was so cheaply and readily available to the American commercial networks.

Television's contribution to the recent off-year elections can only be considered a national disgrace. If there was one program that made a serious attempt to provide a forum for extended discussion of the issues, or to treat the campaigns as more than a matter of merchandising candidates, then I failed to see it. Programs like *Meet the Press* or *Face the Nation,* where politicians give carefully uninformative answers to an overly deferential panel of journalists, are more like rituals than contributions to political enlightenment; and campaign news specials invariably seem to focus on handshaking, electoral strategy, and trend analyses rather than serious political choices. One can, perhaps, forgive an industry so dependent upon ratings its obsession with opinion polls and the calculation of "interest groups," but how stultifying to see the American dream reduced to nothing more than these sordid exercises in addition and subtraction. Characteristically, the networks entered with enthusiasm into something they *could* understand—the President's image-oriented tour of the Pacific, the most spectacular pseudo-event since the South Vietnamese elections.

In other countries, where the general level of political and intellectual journalism may be far lower than it is in the U.S., publicly-owned television services dare to encourage debate, controversy, and even, at times, outrage. The American networks, smug in their devotion to free enterprise, are content to offer three virtually identical versions of the Madison Avenue-corporate establishment ethos. If any kind of real intellectual dialogue is ever to take place on U.S. television screens, it will have to be on a network organized on totally different principles. For years, the NET has been trying to do such a job, though hampered by poverty and inadequate national coverage. Now, the dramatic plan of McGeorge Bundy and the Ford Foundation to make possible an ETV network linked by communications satellites may be the breakthrough that once looked as though it would never come. How appropriate that the Ford money which helped to nurture the electronic Cerberus of commercial TV may be used to finance a more civilized alternative.

NEIL COMPTON, *chairman of the English department at Sir George Williams University in Montreal, here ends his quarterly appraisals of American television. Mr. Compton will continue to be a regular contributor to these pages.*

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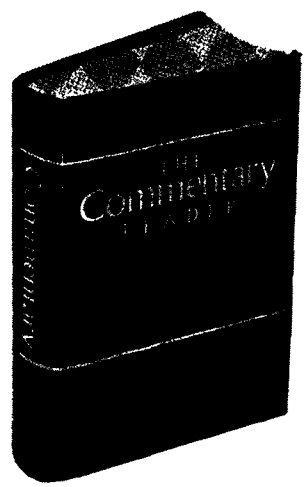

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PAROCHIAL EDUCATION

THE EDUCATION OF AMERICAN CATHOLICS. By ANDREW M. GREELEY and PETER H. ROSSI. *Aldine Publishing Co. 368 pp. $8.95.*

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN ACTION. Edited by REGINALD A. NEUWIEN. *University of Notre Dame Press. 328 pp. $10.50.*

Reviewed by DANIEL CALLAHAN

AMONG THE odds and ends of my thoroughly uninteresting personal history, there are the following bits of data: Roman Catholic, education to the 16+ level, income over $15,000, six children, with all three school-age children in the public schools. As an instance of sociological trends, should one be surprised at this choice of schools? Before answering, consider some further biographical information. As a child, I attended parochial schools through the high-school level; my parents, respectful Catholics, never considered any other kind of school. While my father had only a high school education, he became a "successful" businessman, though not quite so successful, I suppose, as I have become in my line of work. By most indices, then, I occupy a higher social status than my parents. I am, moreover, a reader of *Commonweal* (not unfitting for an editor), and could thus aptly be thought of as a "progressive" or "liberal" Catholic. Finally, it should be said that I take my religion seriously; the atmosphere of my home, if not exactly pious, is clearly religious.

Now had I, some months ago, tried to answer my own question about the likelihood that someone of my background would be sending his children to public school, I would have answered "of course." It all fits: more money, more education, a more progressive kind of Catholicism; *ergo,* public schools. Add to this the fact that I am highly critical of parochial schools (which is why I don't send my children to them) and the picture is complete. Only the dullest would be surprised by my choice of schools.

They might not be surprised, but they would be wrong. If we are to believe the evidence gathered by Father Andrew Greeley and Peter H. Rossi of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, my children should, sociologically speaking, be in a parochial school. Every index I mentioned in my own case, including the reading of *Commonweal* and a critical attitude toward parochial schools, points in that direction, and overwhelmingly so. With statistics like these in hand, it is easy to understand why Messrs. Greeley and Rossi see few signs that the Catholic lay demand for parochial schools is about to taper off. On the contrary, the more affluent and educated Catholics become, the more likely they are to support the schools. This is not to say they won't be critical of them; they will, but the criticism will usually reflect concerned commitment rather than hostility. Anyone who hopes that the parochial schools will gradually fade from the scene has little yet to go on. The hierarchy and the laity together overwhelmingly support them. There, at present, the matter stands.

The purpose of the Greeley-Rossi study, however, was not to inquire whether the schools should be continued, but to measure the effects of a Catholic education in later life. Together with another recent study, *Catholic Schools in Action,* there exists for the first time a sizable body of data on the quality, success, and problems of the Catholic school system. Both studies were sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation and, at least in the case of the Greeley-Rossi report, it got its money's worth. The Notre Dame study, while useful, is marred by blatantly sloppy methods of data collection and evaluation. It is better than nothing, but it seems incredible that a university with the resources of Notre Dame should have tolerated such ineptitude (even the format of the book is terrible, as if the editor and his associates had decided that crude contents deserved a crude appearance).

THE MAIN conclusions of both books can be summed up fairly easily. The Greeley-Rossi study found that Catholic education is moderately successful in shaping adult behavior, especially in what they call "symbolic" areas: observance of Church law, respect for Church authority, sexual mores, and loyalty to the school system. At the same time, they note that American Catholic religious behavior is strikingly faithful in the first place, and that it probably would still be high had there never been a school system. In less "symbolic" areas—attitudes toward minority groups, civil liberties, even Christian charity—the impact of Catholic education is almost nil. Only 45 per cent of those whose education was entirely Catholic, for instance, strongly disagreed with the proposition that "Jews have too much power in the United States," and only 41 per cent were willing to affirm that "Jewish businessmen are about as honest as other businessmen." While it might be objected that those surveyed in the NORC study had been out of the schools for many years, and thus may reflect an older brand of Catholic education, the Notre Dame survey shows that those presently or very recently in the schools display strikingly similar attitudes of bias toward Negroes and Jews. Though a higher parental level of education and social class, and a more fervently religious family life, were shown to help improve matters, they do little to arrest the overall drift of the evidence.

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In other respects, Greeley and Rossi found little evidence to support the long-cherished views that Catholic education is "divisive," that its products are less prepared to compete in the economic marketplace or that it hinders academic and intellectual achievement. The Notre Dame study generally supports these findings so far as the present generation of students are concerned. What the results of both amount to is that the Catholic schools have done a far better job in preparing their students for the world than many suspected. They are likely to be disappointing only to those Catholics who believed the schools were working miracles of religious education; no miracles, just moderate success, and then only in terms of ideals and norms more characteristic of the pre-Vatican II Church than what has come since. To wit, the wholly dull conclusion: the schools aren't as bad as some believed, or as good as others thought. Naturally, even the creation of schools whose attainments are modest costs considerable money. Should one ask whether the humble results have been worth all the trouble, those most responsible for the schools will still answer Yes. If you say, "Look how little they have done," they answer that a little is better than nothing and that, anyway, the schools can and will improve; and they are probably right on that point. If you say they have done a poor job instilling a lively concern for social justice, Negroes and Jews, and international responsibilities, they will probably, with obvious embarrassment, admit the point, but add that they are working on that and better results can be expected in the near future; and they are probably right on that score also. If you say that possibly some other system of religious education might work just as well, at much less expense, they will say that indeed it might, but that we already have a functioning arrangement whose deficiencies are easier to correct than it is to embark on totally untried paths. This becoming humility in the face of criticism combined with a steady determination to do better the next time around is difficult to argue against.

For it is an expression of faith, the kind which is proof against evidence and pragmatic arguments, and resistant, in practice, to radical experimentation. It is not, properly speaking, religious faith, but an admixture of the general American faith in the efficacy of education and a specifically Catholic faith in the abiding value of what has proved a hardy and growing educational arrangement. No one gives up his own history without a struggle, especially when he thinks it a glorious one. For most Catholics, the parochial school system is looked upon as the great triumph of the American Church. It symbolizes economic success, the steadfast loyalty of the masses, and victory over the well-arrayed forces of historic American anti-Catholicism. If that were not enough to assure the schools of a future, the hard fact that buildings exist, children fill them to overflowing, and money is owed would take care of the rest. The increasing availability of federal money, a more ready acceptance of Catholic schools by non-Catholic public opinion, and a somewhat diminishing faith in many quarters about the inherent superiority of public education merely garnishes the dish.

YET THERE ARE some very real problems in the schools, as the Notre Dame study makes clear. Though the schools have managed to survive financially, they are finding it harder, not easier, to do so as time goes on. The 19th-century goal of "every Catholic child in a Catholic school" was never anywhere near realized; it is hardly mentioned today. Though the number of children in the schools rose steadily year after year (declining slightly for the first time only in 1965), the percentage of potential children only briefly approached the 50 per cent mark and is now declining. Not only has it become more expensive to build and properly equip schools, but also a serious teacher shortage has developed in the past few years. The reason for this latter development is quickly uncovered: the number of vocations to the religious orders, especially the sisterhoods, has nowhere near kept pace with the growth of the Catholic population. This has meant that lay teachers must be hired, and they cost money, even if they are underpaid. Between 1950 and 1961, the number of religious (nuns and brothers) increased by 47.5 per cent in Catholic secondary schools, the percentage of lay teachers increased by 169 per cent. The figures are even more dramatic in the elementary schools: the number of religious increased by 26.5 per cent and the number of lay teachers by 589 per cent. In 1950, there were 13 religious for every lay teacher; by 1961, there were 2.38 religious for every lay teacher (and the gap has continued to close rapidly even since then). As if this didn't spell trouble enough, the past few years have seen a sudden drop in the total number of religious vocations, with an especially sharp drop recorded in the women's religious orders (which have traditionally provided the bulk of Catholic teachers).

Figures of this kind introduce an entirely new factor into the parochial school equation. So far, the only important noticeable effects are the higher costs of securing teachers. But there are bound to be others as well, and they should make their appearance shortly. For one thing, Catholic parents have been reluctant to accept lay teachers. Should the schools become predominantly lay-staffed (which seems inevitable), the traditional enthusiasm for the schools could well begin to wane. For another, the bishops and clerical school superintendents have also been reluctant to take on lay teachers (even though they have had no other choice). Should they gradually come to lose control of the schools because of predominantly lay staffs, their enthusiasm could quickly wane as well. This seems all the more likely since the price they will have to pay for good lay staffs will not only be in money but in a sharing of power.

Just as the schools are beginning to make some genuine progress, and just as they are beginning to win some positive public acceptance, then, some very serious problems are developing—the kinds of problems which even a very heavy traditional faith in the schools could find hard to swallow. Yet

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should this faith be forced to undergo some degree of self-suppression, it will no doubt give rise to various kinds of sublimation: the sublimation of concentration on the high-school or college level only, or a conscious decision to cater only to the brightest and most highly motivated. And I can't help thinking that if a Catholic like myself, one who has consciously chosen public schools for his children, is at the moment statistically rare, he won't be for long. For sooner or later it is bound to dawn on more Catholics that the much-desired reform of the Church cannot take place as long as so much of its money is channeled into education. But at the moment, I'm afraid, that is my private faith, shared by few of my fellow Catholics.

THE MAN FROM MISSOURI

THE TRUMAN PRESIDENCY. By CABELL PHILLIPS. *Macmillan. 463 pp. $7.95.*

THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY. Edited by BARTON J. BERNSTEIN and ALLEN J. MATUSOW. *Harper & Row. 518 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by
JAMES MACGREGOR BURNS

CABELL PHILLIPS is an honest researcher. He reports wryly that he journeyed out to the Harry S. Truman Memorial Library in Independence with high hopes of finding Truman's working papers on major White House decisions and policies, only to discover that these were considered to be the former President's personal papers and were still restricted. (Now Mr. Phillips is down on all Presidential libraries and wants the records centered in Washington.) The author is equally candid about his use of the immense amount of books, articles, and official documents on the Truman administration. "In most cases I found the supply overwhelming, so I chose a manageable few and trusted to luck that I had made the right selections."

Happily, Mr. Phillips has relied mainly on his journalistic skills, Washington memories and contacts, and his long experience in the New

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York *Times* Washington Bureau to produce a warm and evocative account of Truman's Presidential years. With some of the freshness and nostalgia of *Only Yesterday* and similar books he helps us relive the sad, jarring days after Roosevelt's death, the sordid efforts to decontrol prices, the fierce postwar strikes, the seesaw struggle in Korea, and of course the 1948 election campaign, the Hiss case, and the struggle with McCarthy.

But Mr. Phillips wanted to do more than report these events; like the rest of us, he is curious as to how Harry Truman, who had failed in so many ventures in life and entered office with so little promise of greatness, could rate so high today in the historians' pantheon. Although he does not develop Truman's mediocre achievements of earlier years in the same graphic detail as Alfred Steinberg in *The Man From Missouri*, Mr. Phillips does raise the issue as to how, in his words, "so ordinary a man [could] adapt so well to the most exacting political office in the world." But he never really answers this key question—a question so vital in a day when Presidential quality and character are so crucial to the nation and the world. Rather, he contents himself with citing at the end an arresting but nebulous column by Eric Sevareid on Truman's character—his simplicity, honesty, and self-discipline.

So Mr. Phillips leaves it up to the reader to solve the mystery of Harry Truman. Unhappily, although the interplay between Presidential personality and Presidential office has long fascinated American historians and political scientists, we have come up with little hard theory or solid generalization as to the nature of the relation—especially the effect of the office on the man. Hence, there is a tendency to retreat to simplistic ideas—even to a kind of Gabriel-over-the-White-House theory that crisis produces greatness, that strong Presidents are forged in the crucible of high-pressure decision-making. (The trouble is that pressure can disintegrate character as well as harden it.)

My own hunch—without having worked in the Truman documents—is that Truman benefited more than he or his historians have recognized from the organization and power and tradition of the Presidential system he inherited. Under the pressure of war, Roosevelt had created a truly executive office that attracted talent and knew what to do with it. It may even be possible that Truman's chairmanship of the wartime investigating committee brought him close enough to the problems and perspectives of the Presidency, even while he was probing some of the administration's failures, to make the war years a kind of Presidential apprenticeship for him.

SOME SUPPORT for such a thesis can be found in Phillips's book. He brings out convincingly the contrast between Truman's creativity, firmness, and sophistication in foreign policy-making, and his wobblings and relative ineffectiveness in domestic. Not that his general domestic program was faulty; Truman was, after all, continuing strongly in the New Deal tradition. But he seemed to lose control not only of Congress but of his own administration. We remember the Marshall Plan and the other great ventures. But the same President fumbled again and again in dealing with domestic matters to which, as a New Deal senator and Midwestern politician, he should have brought a practiced hand and even finesse.

Two examples of this lack of skill: in 1946, James Patton, head of the Farmers Union, wrote the President demanding that he fire Secretary of Agriculture Clinton Anderson for undermining price controls. Here is Truman's answer: "I read your letter . . . with a great deal of interest and I regret very much that you are at odds with my able Secretary of Agriculture. You know, as far as Cabinet positions are concerned, they belong to the President and, as long as Secretary Anderson is satisfactory to me, I'll keep him. I think you are entirely misinformed on his attitude. I think he is as able a Secretary of Agriculture as the country has ever had and I intend to keep him." This is an honest answer, quite probably written by Truman himself, and one that breathes his courage and independence. But it was not one that would persuade

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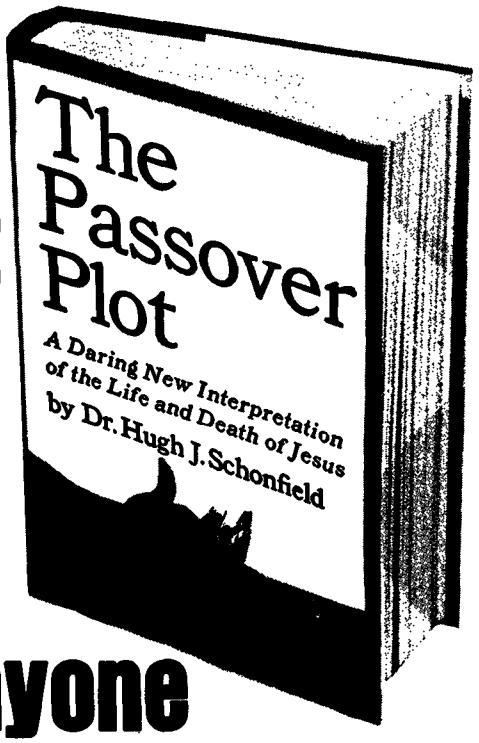
Truman's critics; it was not convincing on *policy*. A second and far more serious instance: during the railroad strike of 1946, an angry and frustrated President went before Congress to demand that he be authorized to "draft into the Armed Forces of the United States workers who are on strike against their Government." He had brushed aside questions and warnings from his staff and Cabinet. He even wrote a speech in which he planned to call on veterans "to come with me and eliminate the Lewises, Whitneys, and the Johnstons; the Communist Bridges and the Russian Senators and Representatives and really make this a government of, by, and for the people." More cautious White House hands got him to tone down the speech, but Truman's final public position was still both dangerous and feeble as policy.

How explain the strange convolutions in domestic policy in the earlier years? In large part, I think, by the difference between Truman's advisers in foreign and domestic policy. Within a few weeks of his accession, he jettisoned almost all of Roosevelt's domestic brain trust and top officials. But in foreign policy—where the President doubtless felt less knowledgeable and more dependent on the White House inheritance—he kept on men of the stamp of Stimson, Harriman, Marshall, Acheson, Kennan, and Bohlen.

SUPPORT FOR such a view is found in Bernstein's and Matusow's documentary history of the Truman administration. Not only have the editors produced a model for this kind of collection, with its penetrating editorial prefaces, imaginative selections, handsome format, and remarkable range of materials (to mention a few: opposition speeches in Congress, excerpts from congressional hearings, the Hiss-Chambers confrontation, Congressman John F. Kennedy's anti-Truman statement on China policy). Even more important, because of its emphasis on decision and policy, the book enables us to make judgments about Truman and his administration. And one cannot help being struck by the contrast in the early Presidential years between the



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prudence, continuity, and creativity that marked foreign policy, and the hasty judgments, improvisation, and fumbling in domestic policy.

After the 1948 election, Truman built up a corps of able men in domestic policy too. As we look back on the period we can conclude, I think, that Truman's greatness or near-greatness was an amalgam of his own sturdy self-assertiveness, his awareness from reading American history of the indispensability of a strong Presidency, his role as both leader and agent of the New Deal coalition, and—perhaps most important of all—the quality of the men continuing in the historic office around him. The exact relation of these forces may continue to elude us; but surely it is out of such materials as these, in varying combinations, that Presidential greatness is fashioned.

THE EICHMANN TRIAL

AND THE CROOKED SHALL BE MADE STRAIGHT. By JACOB ROBINSON. *Macmillan. 406 pp. $6.95.*

JUSTICE IN JERUSALEM. By GIDEON HAUSNER. *Harper & Row. 472 pp. $12.50.*

Reviewed by LÉON POLIAKOV

JACOB ROBINSON'S extraordinarily erudite book might have become the classic work on the Jewish catastrophe of the last war, had not its author limited himself to a very specific objective: a critique, or, more accurately, a total demolition, of Hannah Arendt's by now famous *Eichmann in Jerusalem.* To write a book against another book is a delicate undertaking. A work of this sort easily leaves itself open to the suspicion of being merely an *ad hominem* polemic, not to say a rather petty quarrel with an author whose chief failing might have been nothing more than her success. The task is rendered all the more thankless, moreover, by the fact that in an attempt of this kind, it is not the challenger, but rather his adversary, who has the choice of terrain and weapons. The critic, for his part, forced into the role of arbitrator between the two, does not have an easy task of it.

By now, the principal conclusions reached by Hannah Arendt are well known. In brief, she suggested that the trial of Eichmann suffered from serious juridical deficiencies; that the accused was neither more nor less evil than the average man ("the banality of evil"); and that, participating in this banality, the Jews of Europe in various ways, shared the responsibility for their own plight. These conclusions she derives from an examination of the historical facts emerging either out of the trial itself, or from her own reading. Mr. Robinson, who knows more facts, and knows them better than she does, addresses himself to demonstrating systematically that Miss Arendt's book abounds in errors, and that as a philosopher, she lacks both training and a sense of historic prudence. But in doing so, what does he in turn finally succeed in proving? Here is an example: Eichmann affirmed in the course of his trial that he had had nothing to do with the deliveries of the lethal Zyklon B gas to the death camps, and Miss Arendt takes his word for this, as well as for other statements. Mr. Robinson, however, objects that the administrator of the Final Solution could not have been unimplicated in this aspect of the undertaking, and he cites documents in support of this. He is no doubt right. But wherein does this particular error of Hannah Arendt, any more than her numerous other errors, disqualify her principal claims? What difference does it make, to take another example, if the number of Jews deported from France was about 80,000, and not 52,000? When in the annals of scholarship, have technical errors ever hindered people of talent from arriving at valid and fruitful results? And where is that historical work in which a badly-intentioned, dedicated, hostile critic could not find a certain number of errors? Miss Arendt's book, after all, did not pretend to be a work of historic erudition. It appeared first, let us recall, as a series of articles in the *New Yorker,* and in fact it amounts to a kind of philosophic reportage on the problem of good and evil, in the context of the Hitlerian enterprise of genocide.

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ESSENTIALLY, therefore, the issue comes down to a moral debate devolving more upon judgments of value than on facts. Robinson addresses himself primarily to the matter of factual errors; yet it is in the passages where he raises the moral questions that he is—and by far—at his most interesting and most convincing. On these points, his work is remarkably effective in shedding light on the deepseated bias of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Thus, he carries great conviction, for example, when he reproaches Miss Arendt for showing consistent hostility to the witnesses in the trial—that is, the spokesmen for the victims; for referring ironically to Abba Kovner, a Jew who resisted, while invoking the name of a German counterpart, Anton Schmidt, with emotion; for treating her venerable compatriot, the late Rabbi Leo Baeck of Berlin, very cavalierly; for tending to deny the very fact of Jewish resistance, and for retrojecting this tendency into the past by maintaining that at the time of the Tsarist pogroms, the Jews let themselves be butchered without offering the slightest resistance.

Here we approach the central point of the debate, the one that in all the polemics about *Eichmann in Jerusalem* has proven the most explosive: is it correct that the Jews through their own leaders [i.e., the Jewish councils], "cooperated in their own destruction" —whence their complicity with the Nazi evil? As a philosopher, Miss Arendt has a tendency to systematize and to generalize (especially in connection with the role and the moral conduct of the Jewish councils), thus offering Mr. Robinson as a historian ample opportunities to question her findings.

Mr. Robinson has no difficulty in compiling a long list of errata on this score, and he shows himself the more prudent in abstaining from asking the reasons for Miss Arendt's one-sided distortion of the past. For my part, I think it is the Jew in her that sharpens her critical sense where her fellow Jews are concerned, to the point where she practices a kind of double standard, very much in the manner of certain prominent Jewish intellectuals of the past and

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present. (The list of these would be long and brilliant; perhaps it is not entirely accidental that the first historical essay written by Hannah Arendt should have been devoted to the fascinating, and tragic, Rachel Varnhagen von Ense, *née* Rachel Lewin, the first of the great German-Jewish "self-haters.")

THE CRITICAL chapter of *And the Crooked Shall be Made Straight* is the one devoted to "Jewish Behavior before the Disaster." To Miss Arendt's thesis about the "specter of universal cooperation of the Jews" ("the stifling, poisoned atmosphere which has surrounded the Final Solution"), Robinson opposes a far more comforting view of things, multiplying examples of resistance active or passive, of sacrifices made by rabbis and community leaders, in conformity with talmudic precepts and glorious historical precedents. He, too, can be reproached with a tendency to one-sided selection of facts, for there is no denying that his vision of the confrontation between the Nazis and the Jews is perfectly Manichean. Still, in the infinitely rich fabric of history, there are situations for which such an approach and its corresponding clichés, irritating though they may be, constitute a better approximation of the truth than a more subtly shaded picture would.

Was the trial of Eichmann a fair trial? Did Israel trample international law underfoot? During 1960 and 1961 this debate raged among specialists on the subject. Not being a jurist; I confess I was often incapable of following their reasoning, or of verifying the validity of the precedents they invoked apropos a trial whose salient feature was the legally unprecedented nature of the crime involved. Can human justice function in a satisfactory way without relying upon legal precedents? It must be acknowledged that Mr. Robinson is a better jurist than Miss Arendt, and that the eighty pages he devotes to the defense both of the Nuremberg trials and the one at Jerusalem are probably a model of juridical discussion: but the few words with which a French philosopher not long ago characterized the Eichmann Trial—"a trial both indispensable, and impossible"—seem to me to constitute a more adequate judgment.

And it is a judgment which could perhaps be applied equally to Robinson's book. A methodical correction of Miss Arendt's oversights and errors in judgement was indispensable; nevertheless, given the force of her dialectic, the sincerity of her convictions, and the solace which she doubtless provides to a certain class of readers, I ask myself whether, on both sides of the Atlantic, a vast public will not continue to base its judgment of who bears the responsibility for genocide upon the paradoxical *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.

GIDEON HAUSNER, prosecuting attorney of the Eichmann trial and himself a target of Miss Arendt's criticism, has undertaken yet another refutation of her thesis. *Justice in Jerusalem* is a lawyer's book, tightly argued and richly documented. Mr. Hausner, unlike Jacob Robinson, has taken pains to set his argument within the framework of a comprehensive survey of the Final Solution, which he narrates with a literary skill far superior to that displayed in similar treatments of this subject. In addition, he makes use of several previously unpublished documents, including sections of the confession dictated by Eichmann, shortly before his capture in Buenos Aires, to the newspaperman Sassen.

Although moderately successful as a narrative, however, *Justice in Jerusalem* suffers perceptibly from a tendency toward oversimplification and a lack of historical perspective. Mr. Hausner's main premise is that Eichmann was the very embodiment of anti-Semitic evil (hence perfectly suited to his role of executor of the Final Solution) and that Germany itself, ever since the Middle Ages, has been a hotbed of anti-Jewish feeling. In making this second point, Mr. Hausner compresses a millennium of German history into two pages, in the course of which he commits at least two minor errors (Heinrich

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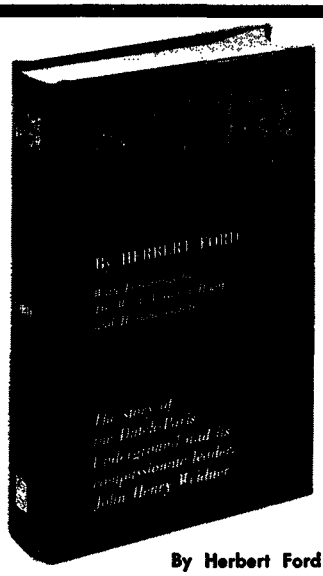

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von Treitschke was a historian, not a "political scientist"; Paul Boetticher-Lagarde was not a "novelist" but an orientalist). But, more seriously, it is his first point, concerning Eichmann as the personification of absolute Evil, which Mr. Hausner fails to make plausible, despite the abundance and the variety of his arguments. Indeed, some of the evidence he produces conveys the opposite impression:

> Sometimes, he [Eichmann] provided a droll illustration of the way his mechanistic mind operated. One morning he was given by mistake six slices of bread for breakfast instead of the usual two. He ate all six. When the guard asked him whether he would like to have six slices in the future, he replied, "Oh, no. Two are quite enough. But when you give me six, I have to eat them."

Such a pitiful display of servility, one cannot help but feel, ill becomes a candidate for the office of Evil Genius. (One is reminded of the sense of incongruity felt by many spectators at the trial—including, most notably, Miss Arendt—between the man and the job he performed.) The question of innate evil aside, one inclines to agree with the defense attorney's contention that in a normal political order Eichmann—whatever his private opinions—would have led a model existence. We might also recall that Eichmann assured the court that he was not an anti-Semite, an assertion that might be taken as further proof of his mendacity, but which also raises the question of what it means to be an anti-Semite under a regime which virtually proclaims anti-Semitism as the official religion. Intense hatred, like intense love, seems to flourish on contradiction; once sanctioned by public authority, it loses a great deal of its attraction—a phenomenon which appears to be confirmed by everything we know about the psychological character of those responsible for carrying out the genocide.

The crucial problem, then remains that of the criminal state, a state which can allow a person like Eichmann to assume satanic proportions. The mass murders were a collective crime, perpetrated by innumerable persons, and involving the tacit complicity of an entire nation. (Mr. Hausner, it must be said, harbors no great affection for the Germans, and indeed is as hard on present-day Germany as on the Germany of 1933; he refuses to believe that the "national spirit" has undergone any substantial change since the time of Hitler.)

There remains to be considered the attitude of the Western countries toward the genocide. The indictment is a familiar one, and has been made before, although Mr. Hausner adds a number of new documents to the dossier, taken in particular from the wartime English and American press. Even at a distance of twenty-five years, it makes for depressing reading, a timely reminder of the way in which every armed conflict seems to extend indefinitely the normal boundaries of hypocrisy and barbarity.

Justice in Jerusalem is a useful contribution, no less so for being readily accessible to the intelligence of an average schoolboy. That its accessibility is achieved at great price, through a radical simplification of the issues—both social and ethical—raised by the Nazi genocide, will no doubt be accounted its greatest fault. Mr. Hausner might equally be reproached for having cultivated to excess the epic style, and for failing to achieve a truly profound understanding of the problem he raises. Yet if the danger exists that we might forget the lessons of the Holocaust, it is at least equally dangerous for us to "understand" it too well, by committing the error of over-sophistication.

HISTORICAL ESSAYS

THE UNIQUE AND THE UNIVERSAL. By J. L. TALMON. *Braziller. 320 pp. $6.50.*

Reviewed by WALTER LAQUEUR

PUBLISHERS DO NOT like collections of essays because they do not sell well; critics are not fond of them because they are awkward to review. They may have challenging titles but usually they lack a central unifying theme, and even the best of such collections are, by necessity, uneven. Professor Talmon, the author of this collection of essays, needs no introduction. A great teacher of history, he writes forcefully and with erudition; his illustrations and anecdotes are always entertaining and he takes more trouble than most of his colleagues with presentation and style. He ranges widely; in this volume, he comments on the interaction between nationalism and socialism throughout the 19th century, on the sub-acute *Kulturkampf* in Israel, on Herder's ideas, on the function of the kibbutz, and many other topics. His position (he says) is that of a Jew who has lived through the traumatic experience of Nazism and Communism, chosen Israel as his home, and at the same time feels deeply committed to Western traditions. Characteristically, and rightly in my view, he takes issue with Toynbee not only for misreading Jewish history but for his prostration before the East and his self-flagellation as a Westerner. He writes with particular understanding about the historical necessity of the nation and the dangers of nationalism. Talmon criticizes the late German historian, Friedrich Meinecke, for devoting the greater part of a long life to the victory of the idea of the *Nationalstaat*, which is a law unto itself, over *Weltbuergertum* or universalism. For a Zionist, this is dangerous ground—the same charges were made for decades against the Jewish national movement by the assimilationists. There can be no doubt about Professor Talmon's Zionism: history, he writes, would make no sense unless Israel were one day to be spiritually significant and, in conjunction with the Jewish diaspora, spiritually effective in the world. Obviously, there can be no effective cultural center without a state as its basis.

The history of ideas ("books about books," its critics say) as practiced by Talmon is one of the more interesting divisions of the wider field of historiography, but it has its pitfalls. There is a tendency to treat ideas in isolation from their historical context. There is also the danger of retelling with only slight variations (which are not always important, nor neces-

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sarily correct) stories that have been told by others before. Since, moreover, a historian of ideas usually has to cover a lot of ground, and since he cannot be equally familiar with all of it, there are, almost inevitably, generalizations which are half true, interpretations and statements of fact which are dubious.

DEALING WITH the Jewish ingredient in the cosmopolitan culture of the last hundred-and-fifty years, Talmon, following Isaiah Berlin, points to the contrast between the superb achievements of Jews in (for instance) music, and their rather inferior showing in literature. He mentions Stefan Zweig, Ilya Ehrenburg, André Maurois, and a few others, and says that it is not enough to penetrate the inner springs and hidden recesses of men and societies; vigor and intimacy in literature can come only from subtle, almost unconscious and automatic associations which are imperceptibly experienced within a concrete and long-established tradition. Here, I fear, almost everything is wrong. The Jewish contribution (if there is such a thing) to literature is certainly not inferior to that in music; on the contrary, the choice of names by Professor Talmon is unfortunate. Great novelists are not necessarily the greatest masters of the language —Dostoevsky is one example, Kafka another. As for these "almost unconscious and automatic associations," the absolute mastery of, and feeling for, the language, they are to be found even where there is no concrete, long-established tradition of cultural symbiosis: Pasternak, Mandelstam, Julian Tuwim—one could easily add to the list.

With the intellectual history of modern Germany, Professor Talmon deals at length; the fascination this subject has for a Jewish historian is obvious. He traces the roots of Nazi doctrine back to Herder, Fichte, and Hegel. This is not exactly a new approach, and few will now maintain that Nazism was a sudden aberration of the German spirit. But is it really true that Hegel was an aggressive, pan-German militarist *à la* Bernhardi, who thought that nationhood reached its highest point of self-realization in the convulsions of war? Is it correct to say that in German the word "state" is imbued with the deepest emotions? (It has certainly not been true for Germany since World War I; even the Nazis put *Volk* and race far above the state.) One has the impression that Professor Talmon writes with less authority about German intellectual and political history than about the French Revolution. There is always some truth in what he says, but it is hardly ever the whole, complicated truth. It is, as Taine said about Michelet, *"admirable mais incomplet."* This also emerges from several of Professor Talmon's asides. It is highly unlikely, for instance, that Hindenburg ever called Hitler *"einen boehmischen Feldwebel."* A *Feldwebel* is a sergeant; Hindenburg was no intellectual giant, but about military ranks he knew his stuff. Since Hitler was never promoted to Sergeant, Hindenburg would no more have called him a *Feldwebel* than Professor Talmon would make a mistake about the year of his birth.

Professor Talmon's anti-Germanism is in the pre-1914 East European tradition, which found a number of converts among leading East European Jews—Weizmann, for instance, and perhaps most notably, Professor Talmon's teacher, the late Sir Lewis Namier, who during World War I wrote propaganda pamphlets for the British Foreign Office. This position was not shared at the time by most Jewish leaders outside France and England. Events during the Nazi era seemed to justify the foreboding of Weizmann and Namier, and the historian cannot fail to adjust his perspective accordingly. But one feels that Talmon occasionally misuses his *post-hoc* wisdom. The ideological precursors of National Socialism can be traced back into the 19th century and even beyond—but not only in Germany. On the other hand, it was from Germany that the Jewish national movement received its decisive impulses. Zionism is based on German philosophy; Fichte, Hegel, Lagarde, and the other chief exponents of the German national idea, were its preceptors. Those who are embarrassed by this heritage should know that one cannot really re-evaluate German intellectual history without

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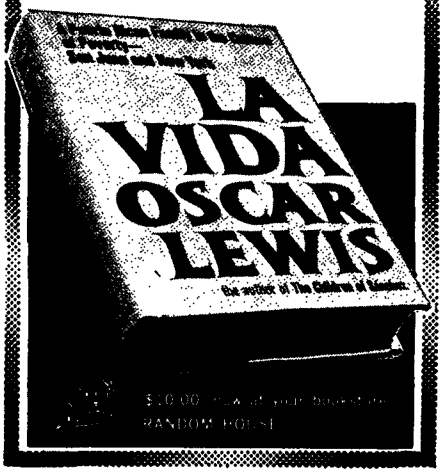

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reassessing the origins of Zionism. As for anti-Semitism, the decisive ideological impact came from France and Russia. And yet, it was precisely in Germany that millions of Jews were killed and the historian wants to know why. At this point, the traditional history-of-ideas approach ceases to be of much use; as Talmon says in a different context, "It is to psychology that we have to look for a new fertilization of historical thinking." I am less confident that at our present level of knowledge in this field, psychology can provide the key—quite apart from the fact that one should not concentrate one's efforts in one direction only. So far there have been many pious wishes; Namier voiced similar sentiments, as also did William Langer and many others. But in their own work, as in that of Professor Talmon, one will look in vain for the results of a new approach. Political scientists have been more daring in this respect but not exactly more successful.

A COLLECTION of essays, as I said, is an awkward medium for the reviewer, and as a result the author is likely to be treated unfairly. I have dwelt on the weaknesses of this book, but it also has fresh insights, and much of value and interest. The essay on Namier (originally published in COMMENTARY in March 1962) is not only a labor of love, the tribute of a pupil to his teacher, it is one of the best such essays I have ever read. Talmon's long review of Leonard Stein's book on the Balfour Declaration is excellent.

On the subjects of socialism and nationalism in the 19th century, there have been many studies in recent years—good, bad, and indifferent; it is doubtful whether fresh ground remains to be broken in our time for really novel approaches or major works of synthesis. There are lacunae—for instance, the history of the Jewish national movement and Jewish socialism. With his profound interest in things Jewish and his powerful equipment for dealing with them in a wider context, it is regrettable that Professor Talmon has not written more often and more systematically on this curiously neglected field, modern Jewish history.

COMING EVENTS

THE LIMITS OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM. By ROBERT L. HEILBRONER. *Harper and Row. 134 pp. $4.95.*

Reviewed by EDWARD S. MASON

THE THEME OF this interesting and provocative little book is the present role and future prospects of that large-scale corporate sector of the economy that now dominates what may be called American capitalism. The gist of the argument may be simply put. The current version of American capitalism will without much doubt hold sway during the rest of this century and well into the next. At the same time, the scope and power of the large-scale corporate sector are in important respects visibly diminishing and the business apologetics offered in its behalf are considered by an increasing proportion of the citizenry to be a mixture of hypocrisy and cant. Termites are already gnawing at the foundation. Some time, presumably beginning in the next century, other, non-business groups will emerge, exercising a larger degree of influence in the selection of social goals and offering to the community a reasoned justification of these goals more acceptable than the one vouchsafed by current business "ideology."

The prime mover in this evolution, or revolution, is science and technology. On the one hand, science-based technology, through its effects on productivity, will create problems of labor displacement that the business system cannot handle and that can only be effectively managed by the state. On the other hand, changes in technology are in process of creating important social groups with a non-business orientation—government administrators, the military, but, above all, a professional community predominantly scientific—with sufficient political influence to substitute other goals and values for those of the business system. Heilbroner obviously assigns a large role in this change to "ideology," "the process of rationalization and intellectualization to which both Max Weber and Joseph Schumpeter referred as the great solvents

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of the spirit of our age." At the same time the path for a new ideology is cleared by the appearance of new social groups and behind this appearance are the activities of science-based technology. Heilbroner offers us what is essentially a technological interpretation of social change.

The book includes two long essays, the first of which is primarily factual, summarizing well-known quantitative data on the position of large firms and offering qualitative judgments on changing power relations of big business. The second, more speculative essay, peers into the future and attempts to discern where present trends may lead us. In the first essay, the author is essentially a popularizer, and a very good one, of established scholarly findings. Heilbroner obviously knows the literature well and treats it perceptively. May we not, however, also ask of a popularizer that his comparisons and illustrations be illuminating? This reviewer found some of Heilbroner's baffling. The 19th- and 20th-century capitalisms of Europe are asserted to be very different from those of contemporary America. "Compare," he says, "the worlds of Proust, Mann, Sinclair Lewis, and J. P. Marquand." The differences and similarities of Western European and American economic structures are interesting and instructive but I doubt whether their differences and similarities are very usefully conveyed by literary disquisitions on 18th-century Lübeck, the Parisian *haute-monde* of the 19th century, or the life of the late George Apley.

One would have thought that the ways of describing and measuring the share of the large corporation in the sum of economic activities had nearly been exhausted. Heilbroner, however, comes up with a new angle. Let us imagine that "some curiously selective catastrophe" obliterated the hundred and fifty largest corporations in the country. If one thinks of the corporation in terms of its physical assets he would inevitably conclude, as Heilbroner does, that "the nation would come to a standstill." This is true but not very interesting. Suppose one thinks of the corporation in the traditional sense as the group of men who control the enterprise and then propounds the question what would happen if the hundred and fifty largest corporations disappeared. We should then have an analogue to Saint Simon's parable propounded a hundred and fifty years ago.

"Let us suppose," said Saint Simon, "that France keeps all of the men of genius it possesses in the sciences, in the fine arts, and in the trades but has the misfortune to lose"—and here he lists the nobles, ministers of state, civil servants, the church hierarchy, and ten thousand of the richest landlords.

"This accident," he observes, "would certainly afflict the French for they are kindly people. . . . But this loss of the thirty thousand individuals, reported to be the most important in the state . . ." would leave France functioning as before.

What would happen if the "top management" of the hundred and

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fifty largest U.S. corporations disappeared? Certainly this loss would be regretted since Americans also are kindly people, but whether the nation would then "come to a standstill" might be subject to doubt.

THE PRESENT POSITION of big business in the United States offers the paradox that while its "legitimacy" has never been less subject to question, its freedom of maneuver is progressively curtailed. "Few would deny," Heilbroner thinks, "that however fiercely labor may attack big business—and it is not very fiercely any more—it is not any longer afraid of the big corporation as it once was." The power to exploit small business enterprises has also declined, largely because of the strengthening of anti-trust legislation. Likewise, "the power of big business to shape legislation or to have its way in the determination of national policy is on the wane." On the other hand, the ability of business to influence consumer choices via lavish advertising expenditures has probably increased, and there is no evidence that the average rate of profit on investment has been lessened by any or all of the influences impinging on the scope of action of large corporations. These are qualitative judgments offered without much searching exploration of the evidence, but they seem sensible to this reviewer.

Heilbroner emphasizes the distinction between the operation of capitalism as a "functional system" in which inputs of land, labor, and capital produce outputs of goods and services, and the operations of capitalism as "a system of privilege"—"a structure in which the top 2 per cent of all American families own between two-thirds and three-quarters of all corporate stock, and where the top 2 per cent of all income receivers enjoy incomes roughly ten times larger than the average received within the nation as a whole."

How are the forces of change now at work likely to affect the capitalist system, on the one hand, as a producer of goods and services and, on the other, as a distributor of incomes within a "system of privilege"? Heilbroner finds the answer to the first question largely in the effects of a science-based technology on the displacement and subsequent redeployment of the labor force. The answer to the second depends mainly on the relative political strength of the non-business groups whose emergence accompanies technological change as compared with the strength of the defenders of the existing "system of privilege" and on the character of the goals and values represented in a new ideology.

Technological change has the direct effect, through a lowering of costs, of a continual expansion of the available supply of material goods, but it has the indirect effect of continuous labor displacement. The only instruments that business has available for handling the problems of material abundance and labor displacement are the profit and loss calculations of the market process. As goods become more abundant, "the necessary marketing behavior must be sustained by supplementary motives of emulation and competitive striving. Thus the endless and relentless exacerbation of economic appetites in advanced capitalism—an exacerbation that does not draw the line at subjecting children to commercial propaganda or at interrupting its most serious presentations 'to bring you this important message from our sponsor'—is not merely a surface aberration, but a deeply-rooted functional necessity to provide the motivations on which the market system depends."

The relentless pressure of advertising and sales promotion may continue to expand the consumption of goods the business system is capable of producing, but probably not at a rate that will make possible the absorption of a constant share of the labor force. If persistent technological change plus the large influx of new entrants into the labor force creates an employment crisis during the next decade, which Heilbroner regards as "not unlikely," policies "designed to create employment through a substantial enlargement of public activities at state and local as well as federal levels" may well be necessary. Such a development would leave the large-scale

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business sector intact but would mark a further diminution in its relative size and importance.

The effect of technological change, including automation, on employment in manufacture, on aggregate employment, and on the distribution of income is still very much an unsettled question. One would suppose that, if the effects on productivity are as great as commonly supposed, these effects would show up in a large increase in the value of output per man-hour. No such discrete change, however, is yet visible in the figures. Nevertheless, there is reason to suppose that manufacturing employment as a percentage of total employment which reached its high point in the 1920's will continue to decline. The evidence of decline would be marked were it not for the persistence of high military output. Although the demand for goods and services in general may be insatiable, the demand for the kind of output manufacturing firms are capable of producing is not. How, then, is the flow of entrants into the labor force to be absorbed? Some part of the answer to this question is provided by a look at three of the fastest growing "industries" in the economy, i.e., education, recréation, and medical care. At this stage there seems little reason to believe that whatever the inroads of automation in the area of goods production, employment opportunities elsewhere in the economy will be insufficient to absorb a properly trained labor force.

But Heilbroner is probably right that these new employment opportunities are likely to be provided by a different mix of public and private enterprise than characterizes the present structure of capitalism. And he is also right in thinking that these changes are likely to bring to the fore groups of professionals, public administrators, and scientists with an essentially non-business outlook. Whether these groups will advance a new set of goals and values capable of replacing the now dominant business ideology remains to be seen.

As the reader ponders the sample statements on business ideology cited by Professor Heilbroner, he can only conclude that this is an outcome devoutly to be wished.

BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

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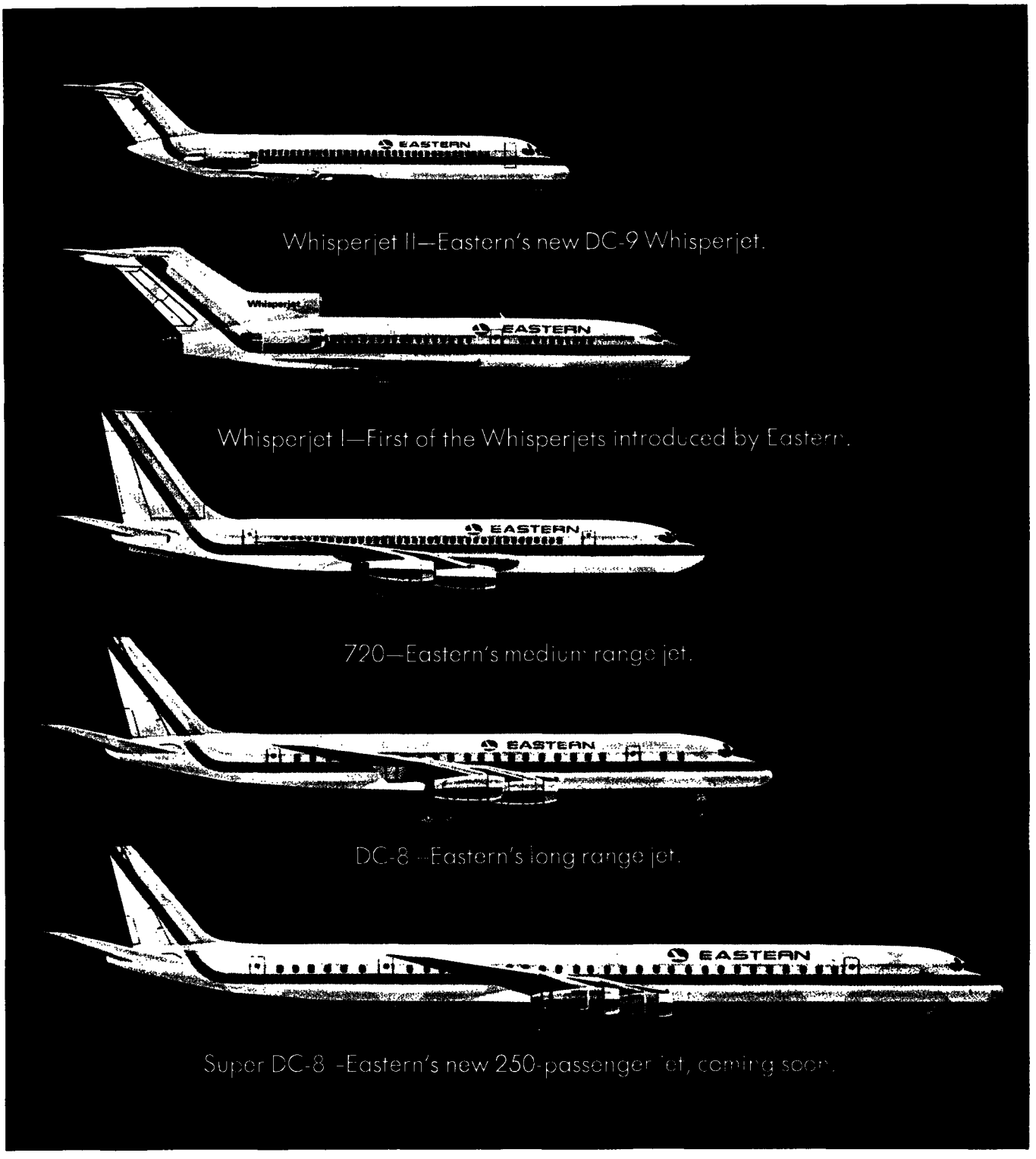

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